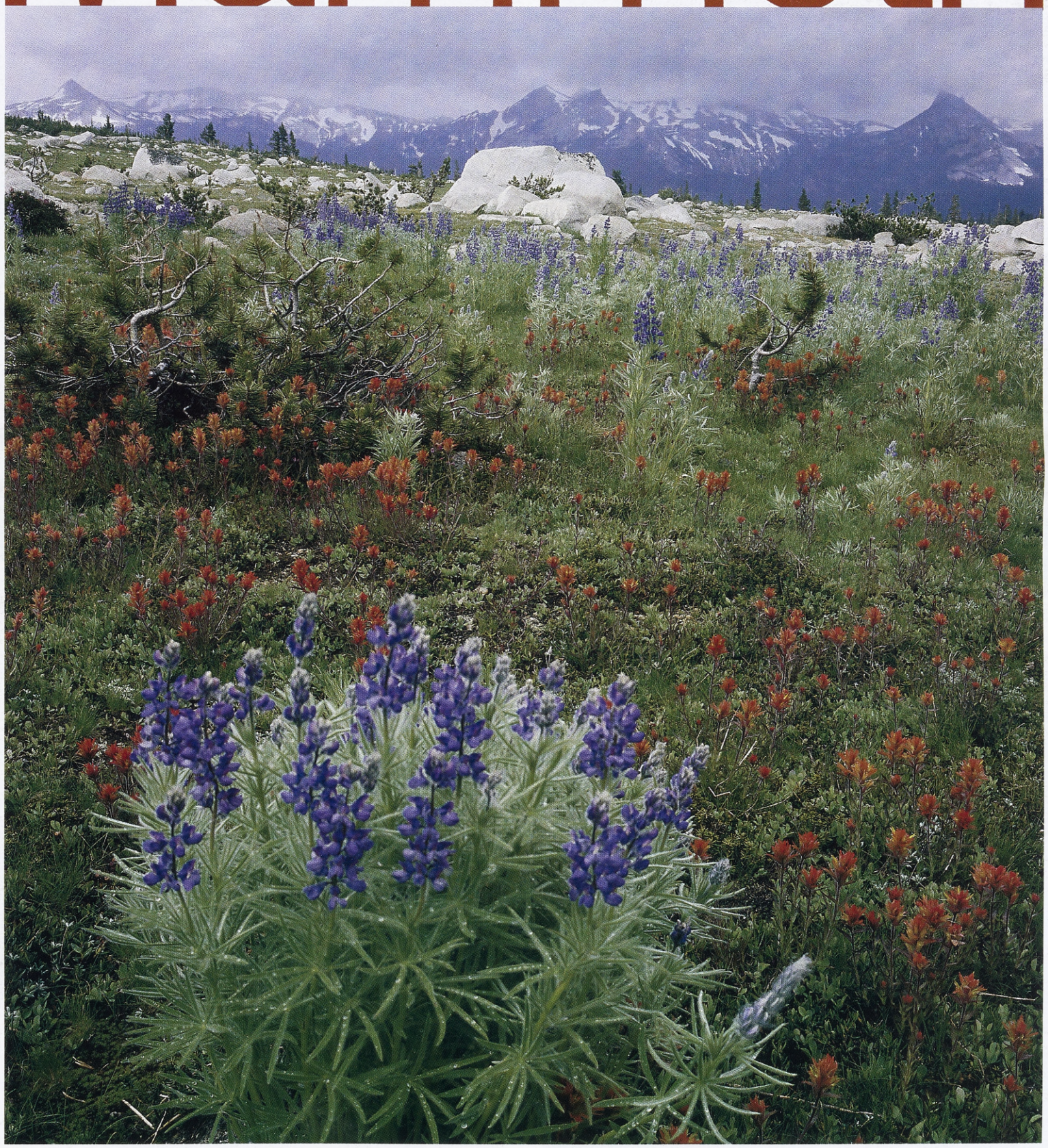
MONTHLY

Mammoth



MAY/JUNE 2004

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WILDFLOWERS

MAMMOTH MOUNTAIN

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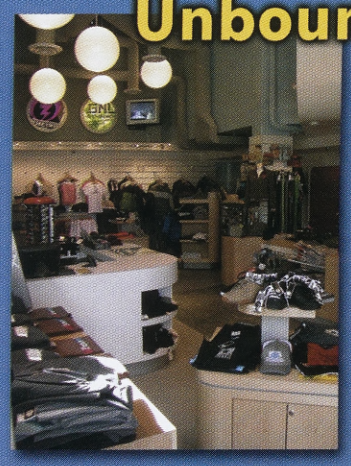

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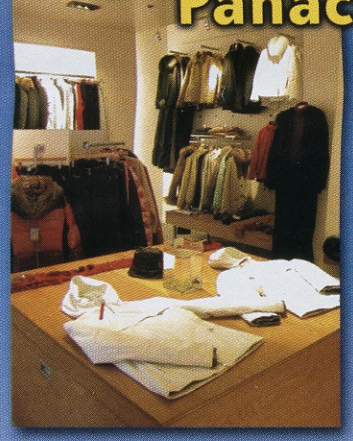

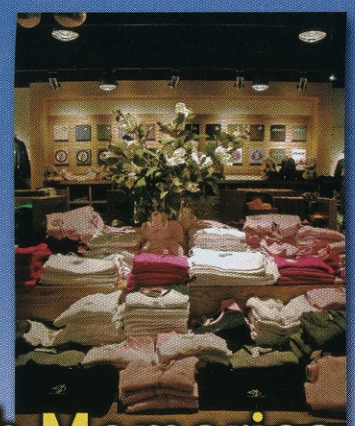

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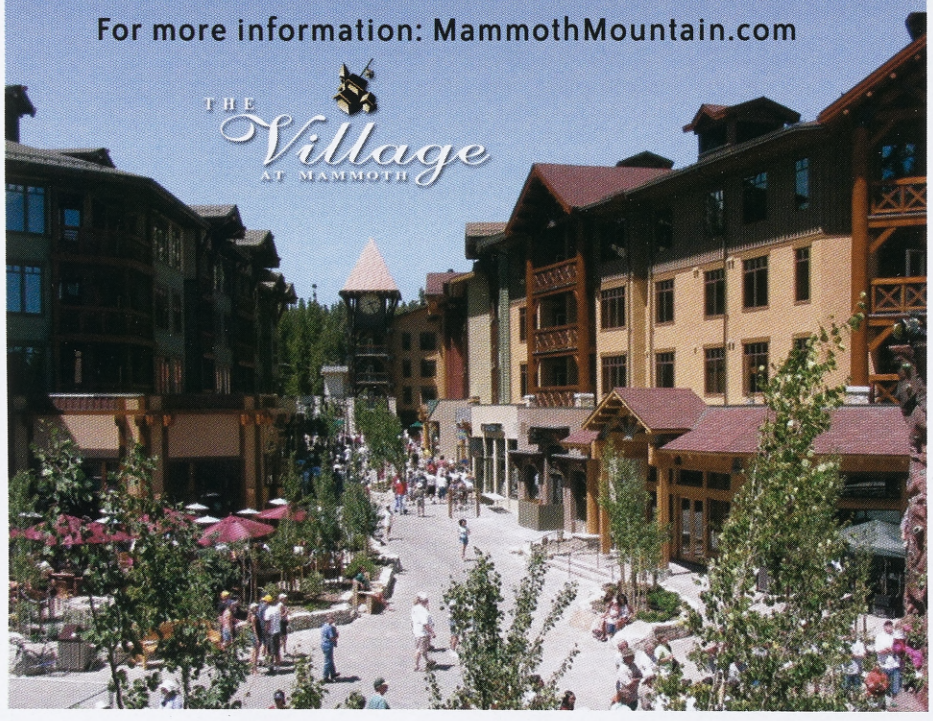

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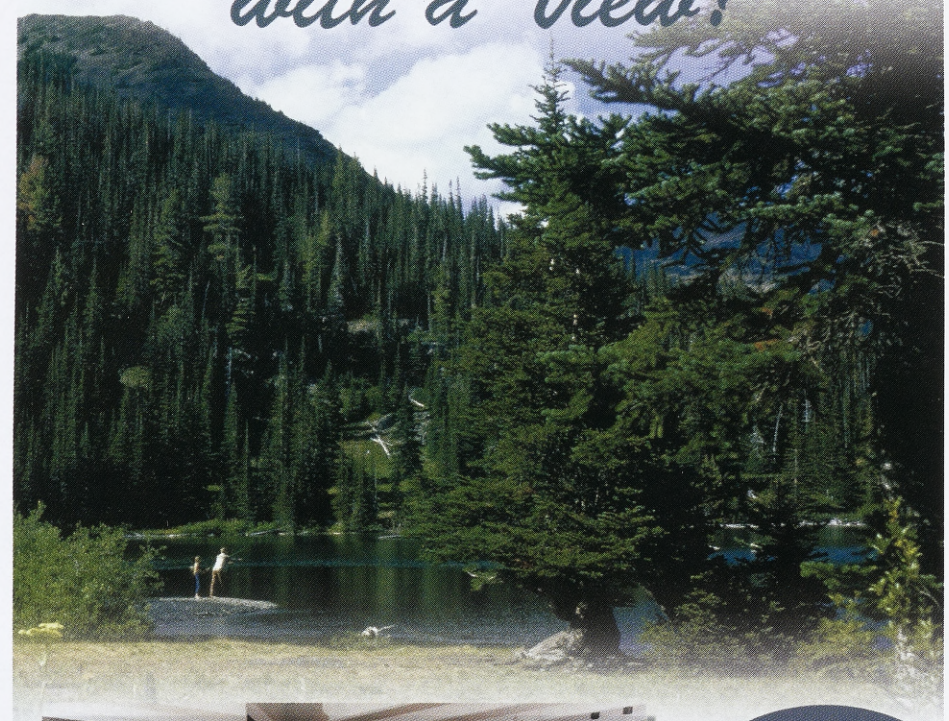

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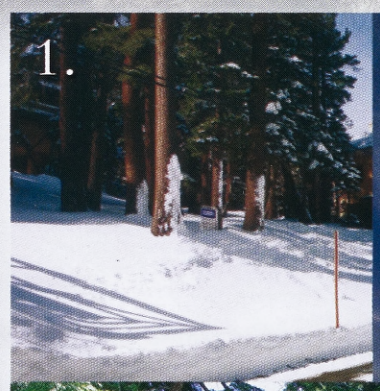
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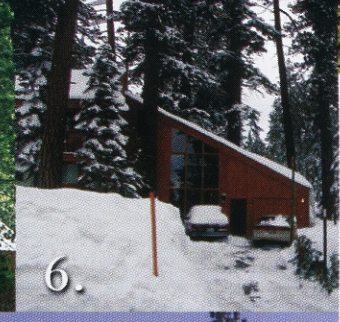
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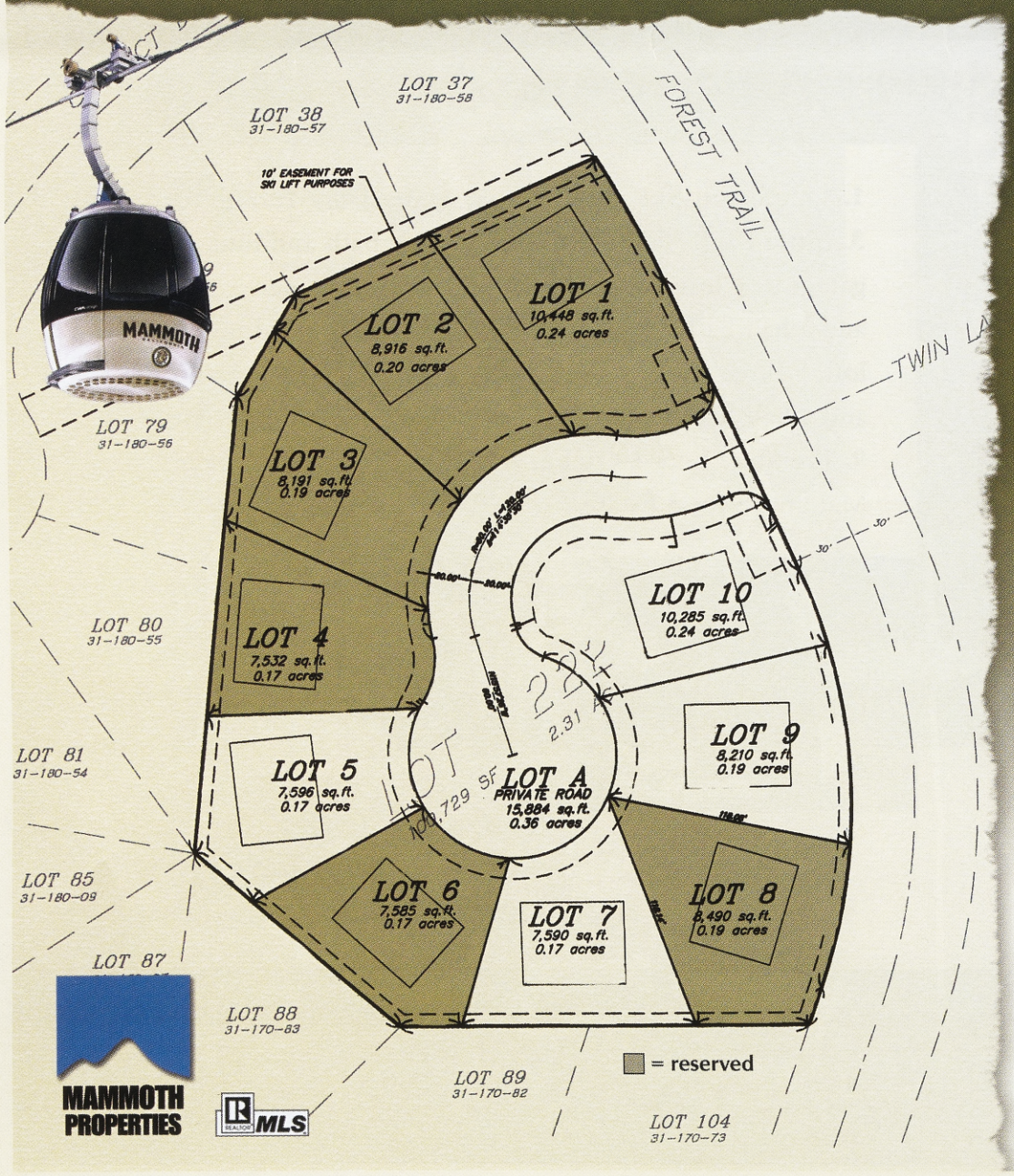

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wildflowers

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NEXT ISSUE

Summer! July brings hiking and biking, climbing and cycling, and tales from a High Sierra fish camp. Pick it up June 15.

What happened?

Another ski season–the most important ski season in recent Mammoth history–is pretty much over, and now the postseason analyses begin. These are the kinds of conversations that will continue as the longer days give way to warm sunshine, which, in turn, give way to languorous discussions on the deck of the Looney Bean, along the rail of the Clocktower Cellar and up and down the approaches to the hiking trails.

Before we address the municipal elections, it should be noted that the ski hill did just fine. The hill always is dependent on the whims of Ullr, the Norse hunter-god of winter (and by the way, death, of which there were four on the hill by mid-March). That being said, skier numbers were up about six percent by March 15, and senior executives at the time cautiously estimated 1.3 million skier visits–possibly 1.4 million–for the season. That would give the Mountain close to its best season in 15 years.

Why this happened is open to analysis. From here, however, it looks as if Mammoth reaped benefits from a good snow season, coupled with unprecedented national publicity–both good and bad–surrounding the opening of the Village and the Village Gondola.

Meanwhile, the Village itself seemed to be a success, particularly among the rowdy, loud-at-3 A.M. younger set, which caused a few problems for the local gendarmes and among the unsuspecting condo dwellers whose units face the walkways. There is still a lot of work to do in North Village. Many storefronts and promised restaurants remained empty and under construction. It's going to be a busy summer, presumably.

The Village Gondola, meanwhile, was so successful that it was responsible for a clogged parking lot across Minaret Road and a curious shift on the ski mountain itself. After just one season, it now seems as if Canyon Lodge–the building is Mammoth Mountain's tribute to Cold War-era East German architecture–has become the main lodge, and it clearly isn't built to handle that kind of load. Meanwhile, Main Lodge itself was hardly ever crowded.

The best-kept secret was the March 2 municipal election, in which conservative councilman Dan Wright lost to newcomer Skip Harvey, owner of the Base Camp Café, while 18-year council member Kirk Stapp was reelected easily. Notably, there was not a single flashpoint issue that emerged in the invisible campaign. The local weekly barely noticed that it was happening at all, and just 27 people showed up for an under-publicized "candidates forum." In the end, fewer than 800 votes were cast for two seats on the five-member Town Council. It's almost as if Mammoth's locals elected to sleep right through it.

On another front, it was gratifying to see the Vons strike finally settled, although that settlement came just in time for the town's only other market, Village (née Pioneer) Market, to announce the store is being demolished to make way for new fractional ownership condos. We are a one-grocery town now, and that's distressing for those of us who like to eat.

And finally, over here at Mammoth Monthly World Headquarters, the entire staff is giddy about our first nomination for a MAGGIE Award (for design) by the Western Publications Association. We're gratified to be recognized by our professional peers in the magazine industry, and delighted to be in such worthy company: we tip our hats to the other MAGGIE nominees, including, among others, Arizona Highways, Sunset, Wired, Alpinist, and Mother Jones.

Contributors to Mammoth Monthly

Vern Clevenger (cover photograph). Clevenger has lived and worked in the Sierra Nevada for over 30 years. He is a world-class rock climber as well as an accomplished mountaineer. He lives with his wife Margaret, his son Dylan and daughter Sabrina in Bishop. Since his recent diagnosis with a brain tumor, The Vern Clevenger Fund has been established to help the family with medical bills. Donations can be sent to the Bank of America branch, 536 N. Main St., Bishop, CA 93514, or, for contributions via the Internet, visit his website at www.vernclevenger.com.

Andy Selters (p. 16). Selters is a local mountaineer, author and photographer (www.andyselters.com) who wrote about paragliding in the April issue. His photographs–from midair–illustrated the piece.

Wendi Grasseschi (pp. 20, 28). A regular contributor and ubiquitous local journalist, Grasseschi wrote about Jim Ouimet and his Mammoth dog teams in April.

Stacy Corless (p. 30). Corless is a regular contributor who in April examined the state of the Mammoth condo market.

Andrea Tetrick (p. 26). Tetrick, a resident of Bishop, wrote about her late grandfather, the former superintendent of the Inyo National Forest, last January.

Stephen Ingram (pp. 18, 21). A wildlife biologist and nature photographer, Ingram's image of a snow-laden pinyon pine in Swall Meadows was the December 2003 cover photograph.

Stacey Mitchell (p. 22). A resident of June Lake, Mitchell specializes in local history. She last wrote about an avalanche ordeal–in the early 20th century–in the February issue.

Tom Urban (p. 24). An Iowa poet who lives part of the time in the Colorado high country, Urban last wrote for the magazine in December 2003.

George Shirk (pp. 5, 6, 8). Formerly a staff reporter for the Des Moines Register and Tribune, the Philadelphia Inquirer, the San Jose Mercury News and the San Francisco Chronicle, he was editor in chief of Wired News in San Francisco before becoming editor of Mammoth Monthly.

Bump Diamond (pp. 12, 14, 25). He skis a little, hikes a little, cycles a little and then, for fun, writes a little.

Correction: In the April issue, the photo of bighorn sheep on p. 25 was credited incorrectly. It is by John Wehausen.

MONTHLY Mammoth
WILD...AND FREE

MAY/JUNE 2004
Vol. 2, No. 6
ISSN 1541-5600

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Printing
Rodgers & McDonald, Carson CA

Distribution
Certified Folder Display, News West

Web Site Hosting
Schat.net, Bishop CA

Web Site Design
Tom Klinefelter, Bishop CA

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Mammoth Monthly is published 10 times a year, with combined issues in May/June and September/October by Mammoth Monthly LLC, of Mammoth Lakes, California.

Mammoth Monthly's minimum press run is 20,000 per issue. The Monthly is available FREE throughout Mammoth Lakes, Bishop and Mono/Inyo counties. The magazine is also distributed FREE in more than 300 outdoor retail shops and other locations in Los Angeles, Orange, San Diego, Ventura, Santa Barbara, Riverside and San Bernardino counties. The controlled distribution is as follows: 50% in Mono/Inyo counties; 44% in Southern California; and 6% in Reno and Las Vegas.

For subscription information or address changes, please write to P.O. Box 1606, Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546 or e-mail subscriptions@mammothmonthly.com. Subscriptions are $18 per year and $27 for two years.

For advertising information, please call Debby Christiana at 760-920-2210 or 760-924-3961 or e-mail debby@mammothmonthly.com.

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BIG TOAD

MAKE WAY FOR THE "SALAMANDER COMMANDER"

BY GEORGE SHIRK

Dan Dawson, director of the Sierra Nevada Aquatic Research Lab (SNARL), says if you take Dr. David Wake, of Berkeley, and introduce him to professors in any zoology program in the country, everyone would know immediately who he is and what he's done.

"He's a really big name," Dawson said. "He's one of the preeminent zoologists in our country, who's been trying to understand vertebrates for 50 years."

As Dawson spoke, you couldn't help but pick up on his enthusiasm, and no wonder.

Wake, 67, dubbed the "Salamander Commander" by his students at UC Berkeley, will anchor SNARL's annual summer lecture series at the Green Church, with a June 10 lecture on amphibian biodiversity. If that sounds a bit dry, Dawson and Wake each make a great case for paying attention.

"Amphibians tell us a lot about the health of our aquatic systems," Dawson said. "They act like canaries in a coal mine."

The reason Dawson—and plenty of others—are interested in Wake's work is that amphibians appear to be in trouble all over the world.

"Amphibians have been around far longer than any of the other vertebrate organisms, with maybe the exception of some ancient fishes," Wake said in an interview from his Berkeley home.

"But as far as terrestrial organisms are concerned, they're much, much older than anything else. They go back 160 million years, and maybe longer. They've been around a long time; they've proven themselves through all kinds of environmental change.

"For example, they passed through the Great Extinction that took the dinosaurs and many other organisms. They passed through that unscathed. They passed through the great Pleistocene extinction that took all the sabertooth tigers and all those other large organisms around the world. And although humans may have played a role in that, for whatever reasons, the amphibians again survived and carried on.

"So if they're in trouble now, we should be concerned and we should ask, 'Why is this old group in trouble? Is there something in the environment that's important?' If there is, is it likely to be affecting only them, or might it have some story to tell us?"

Wake, a native flatlander who grew up on the plains of South Dakota, speaks lucidly and easily about his subject, which is fitting for a man who first felt the pull of nature and science from his grandfather, a Lutheran preacher from Iowa who was, Wake said, "a naturalist from the old tradition."

"When I was about 14, my grandfather, Henrick Solem, and my grandmother, Maria, came to live with us in South Dakota. He was in his late 80s, and he had just retired. He taught me a lot about plants, how to classify them and so on. It was a real passion of his.

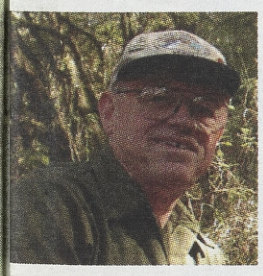
"I'm one of the very few evolutionary biologists who learned about Darwin and evolution from a preacher. But my grandfather was a very open-minded man and he wanted everyone to know ideas as well. I was profoundly influenced by him."

Another big influence, he said, were the mountains.

"The Sierra Nevada has always been a mystical place for me," he said. "When I was growing up, I'd see pictures of Yosemite and I couldn't even imagine it. I remember my first trip to the West Coast when I was about 15. We drove to the state of Washington, where we were going to live, and I had my first glimpse of mountains in Montana. I saw this Crazy Mountain, and I'd never seen anything like it, and I was immediately attracted to them.

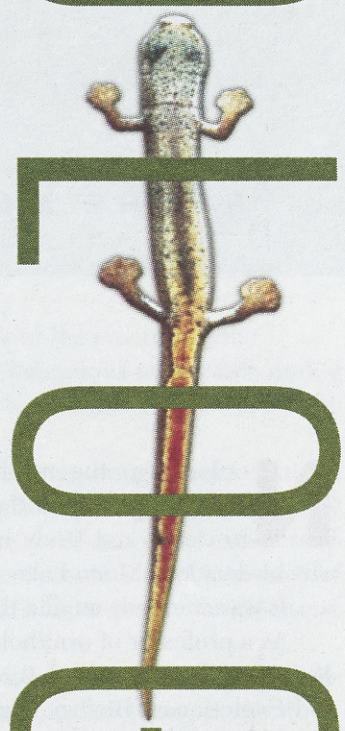
"If you were raised in the plains," he said, "we had nothing much more than a small hill here and there. And then to see these sharp crags, covered with snow, it's just magical for me. So I've always been attracted."

In fact, he and his wife, Dr. Marvalee H. Wake, have a cabin near Ebbets Pass and spend time there during the summer. They have plenty to talk about.



She is Professor Emerita of integrative biology at Berkeley, an evolutionary biologist and morphologist who maintains an active research program. She was just elected president of the American Institute of Biological Sciences and is the immediate past president of the International Union of Biological Sciences.

Dr. David Wake will speak Thursday, June 10 at the Green Church on Benton Crossing Road as part of SNARL's annual lecture series. His talk is sponsored by Mammoth Monthly.



on mono lake

The Birds

AT THE MONO BASIN BIRD CHAUTAUQUA, BIRDERS MAKE A WINGED MIGRATION

BY GEORGE SHIRK

Not long ago, the ornithologist Dr. David W. Winkler was trying to pin down the reason why so many people love to watch and study birds. In particular, he questioned why birders love Mono Lake and the Mono Basin.

It wasn't exactly an idle thought for him.

As a professor of ornithology at Cornell University, Winkler, 48, is Faculty Curator of Birds in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. He also is one of the key founders of the Mono Lake Committee. While the late political activist-scientist David Gaines, and his wife, Sally, remained at the lake to fight the political fight, Winkler moved on in the world of research, eventually ending up at Cornell.

Winkler once again will be a featured speaker at this summer's Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua on June 18-20, the third annual summer solstice gathering of the birding tribe in Lee Vining.

In a recent interview, Winkler was asked why people are fascinated with birds.

After a bit of thought, Winkler suggested that people are endlessly fascinated with birds because birds are so much like…humans.

Um, eh?

"Birds are one of the best groups of animals to study because they're a lot like us," he said from his home in Ithaca, N.Y.

"I know we're not very closely related to them, but we see the world the way birds do. Birds are visual creatures, like us. They don't have a very good sense of smell.

"They're mostly diurnal (daytime creatures), like we are, and so we experience the world much like birds do. We can really relate to them because of that.

"The study of birds has been popular for a very long time," he continued. "My wife is an ichthyologist (she studies fishes) and she's always teasing me, saying that there are more ornithologists than there are kinds of birds."

Many birders and birds are about to descend on Lee Vining for the Chautauqua, a three-day combination of talks, tours,

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field trips, presentations, kids' activities, picnics and you-name-it.

Winkler is to be joined by some of the country's top birders, including Rovana's Jon Dunn; author Kenn Kaufman ("Kingbird Highway"); Dr. Chris Elphick of the University of Connecticut's Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology; Dr. Margaret Rubega, also of UConn, whose specialty is avian functional and evolutionary morphology; Dr. Connie Millar, research geneticist with the U.S. Forest Service at the Sierra Nevada Research Center in Albany, and John Werminski, natural history interpreter with the California State Parks.

Of all the speakers, Winkler is a consensus must-hear, not only because of his expertise in his field, but also his emotional attachment to the Mono Basin and Mono Lake.

It was Winkler who edited the 1977 seminal study, "An Ecological Study of Mono Lake, California," published by the UC-Davis Institute of Ecology. That report formed the basis for the creation of the Mono Lake Committee.

"I'm emotional about the Mono Basin, and despite my spending most of my time out here in the East, I get back to the Mono Basin once or twice a year if I possibly can," he said. "It gets under your skin and it's hard to leave it behind."

One of the reasons the Mono Basin has such a draw, he said, is because much of its geologic history is in plain sight, removing the need to think of its bird life history in abstract terms.

"This year I'm going to talk about what we know about the geologic history of the Mono Basin, with its volcanoes and glaciers and fault scarps everywhere. It's had a very active geologic history, and we know a lot about it, so I'm going to talk about what that tells us about what kinds of birds have been here relatively recently in geologic time. Then we'll examine what that can tell us about how to interpret the nature that we see today.

"The bird populations that occupy the Mono Basin are probably no more than 10,000 years old, at most. These are birds that pretty much came to the site with the features that they currently have. That gives us understanding about how the Mono ecosystem must have assembled itself in relatively recent times, and it suggests that similar 'recency' of communities and ecosystems could apply through many habitats that maybe are a lot older than Mono Lake.

"The geology of the Mono Basin has been one of the major things that has taught me about biology, actually, in the years that I worked there."

For those attending the Chautauqua, the opportunities for gaining a broad understanding of birds are everywhere, Winkler said, because of the unique aspects of the environment.

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Indeed, it's a good thing the Chautauqua takes place during the long days of the solstice, so that birders can get to all the birds they may want to spot.

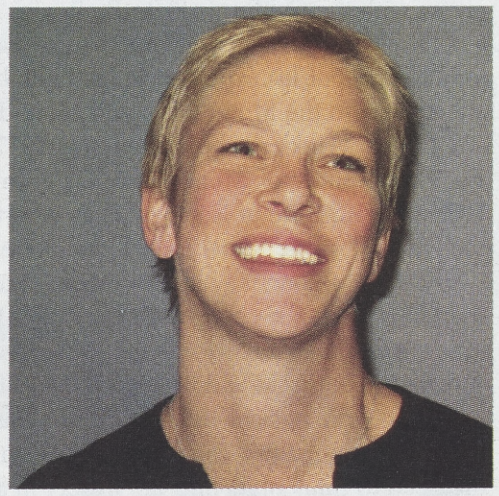
Moreover, the Eastern Sierra ecosystem is very distinct, Winkler added. "There are many places, like Pt. Reyes, or many places along the coast of California, where you'll have more species of birds, because the ocean is such a huge generator of diversity. And a lot of the terrestrial habitats are more diverse at lower elevations, too.

"But what's distinctive about Mono is that the cast of characters is quite different. A birder seldom has the opportunity to look at birds associated with sagebrush, or those associated with high, cold desert, on the same morning that he or she could be looking at water birds on a big lake.

"Also, you get a lot of birds associated with the high mountains, things like mountain bluebirds and Clark's nutcrackers. To see them at the same time that you see gulls and sandpipers is pretty unusual."

For additional information about the Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua, see www.birdchautauqua.org.

In the House with Andrea Clark



AN AFFORDABLE Q & A WITH MAMMOTH'S HOUSING QUEEN

BY GEORGE SHIRK

On the day we dropped in to see Andrea Clark at her office on the Cerro Coso College campus, she was just finishing up a meeting with an independent researcher who was doing a market study on housing in Mammoth. ■ "It's a fairly short, succinct study that she will use," said Clark as she said her good-byes to the analyst and bounded into her office. ■ Speaking as she shuffled papers to one side of her desk and checked her meeting schedule, Clark explained further, "She'll use census data and local rental availability and prices to justify the need for the 48-unit apartment complex that we're going to build on Old Mammoth Road." ■ Behind Clark were large maps and plans for a variety of deed-restricted housing projects–affordable workforce housing–that are on the front burner of Mammoth Lakes Housing, Inc. ■ Clark, 30, is the dynamic executive director of the non-profit company, whose mission is the most daunting, impossible, confusing, exasperating and important one in town. A veteran of community politics and Sacramento lobbying, her experience in local government belies her age as well as informs the urgency of her task. ■ "There's so much pressure to get housing built for people who live here," she said. "The political pressure to get something built is huge." ■ It's not that the Old Mammoth Road project is the most important. On this day it just happens to be more top-of-mind than the other so-called "affordable housing" projects–from the dorm-style, 100-bed apartment building on Main Street to a proposed development of single-family homes on Meridian Boulevard. ■ With a plaintive sigh, she put her cell phone aside and turned her attention to a long interview with Mammoth Monthly, covering everything from growing up in Lancaster, her foray to England, her studies–she earned a masters degree in political science at the University of Montana in Missoula–to her current assignment. ■ Clark, who prefers to use her middle name rather than Laurel, was obviously weary. ■ "I'm working way more than I'm capable of," she said. "I'm exhausted. In the past four months in particular, 80-hour work weeks are not unusual." ■ Clark, whose friends call her "Ande" (pronounced "Andy") serves a board of directors that includes Town Councilman Kirk Stapp, Mammoth Mountain CEO Rusty Gregory, Mono County Supervisor Byng Hunt and realtor Rick Bramble, along with Mammoth Lakes' town manager, currently interim Town Manager Charles Long. ■ It is this group, with Clark in the lead, that is trying to solve a puzzle that has befuddled most major North American ski towns. ■ There's an Aspen model, a Telluride model, a Whistler model and a Utah model, and none of them adequately applies to Mammoth's unique set of circumstances. Mammoth's most obvious difference is that the town is surrounded by public land and has a charter that prevents growing beyond existing town limits. ■ With the baby boomers building vacation trophy homes that stand largely empty for most of the year, real estate prices have outdistanced most people's ability to buy, leaving Mammoth with a problem that could soon be a full-blown housing crisis–if it is not already. ■ To soften the blow, the nonprofit's directors scoured the country for someone–anyone–who could come in and save the day. ■ They found her in their own backyard, living with her partner, Mike Schlafmann, winter sports specialist for the Inyo National Forest, in Crowley Lake.

MM: *You were very active in Missoula before you arrived here. How does a kid from Lancaster become a community activist in Montana, anyway?*

AC: I ended up in Missoula entirely by accident. I was a little bit of a traveling soul when I was in college. I was at Cal State-Sacramento, and I was supposed to be finishing my last year of college at the University of San Francisco. I had a scholarship to finish up there. Before I was supposed to go to USF I spent the summer traveling with my bike and my car, camping around the Southwest. I went up through Yellowstone and into Missoula to visit an old college roommate who had transferred to Montana, and I never left. So I bagged a very good, quality education at USF, with a scholarship, to pay out-of-state tuition at Montana.

MM: *That doesn't seem to be much of a bargain.*

AC: Montana offered a very small school in a wonderful setting that allowed me to do a lot. There was a really wonderful faculty there and they were all there because they loved Missoula, and they offered a wonderful education and an amazing experience for someone like me, who was really looking for an all-around experience. School for me was never just about going to school and getting grades; it was about experiencing life and all the things you do when you go to college.

MM: *How long did it take you to get involved in the town?*

AC: For me, Missoula was all about the fishing, the skiing and the community. I really think of it as the Berkeley of mountain states. It has an amazing community. I immediately got involved in the politics of the community and part of the growth debate that was happening at the time. I ended up running campaigns, working on neighborhood preservation, working with neighborhoods to deal with six-lane highways that were threatening to go through their neighborhoods. I worked to elect an entire school board because the school board at the time was closing neighborhood schools and setting up large attendance centers in new areas of growth. It was there that we learned how to make change.

MM: *So you have been political from the start?*

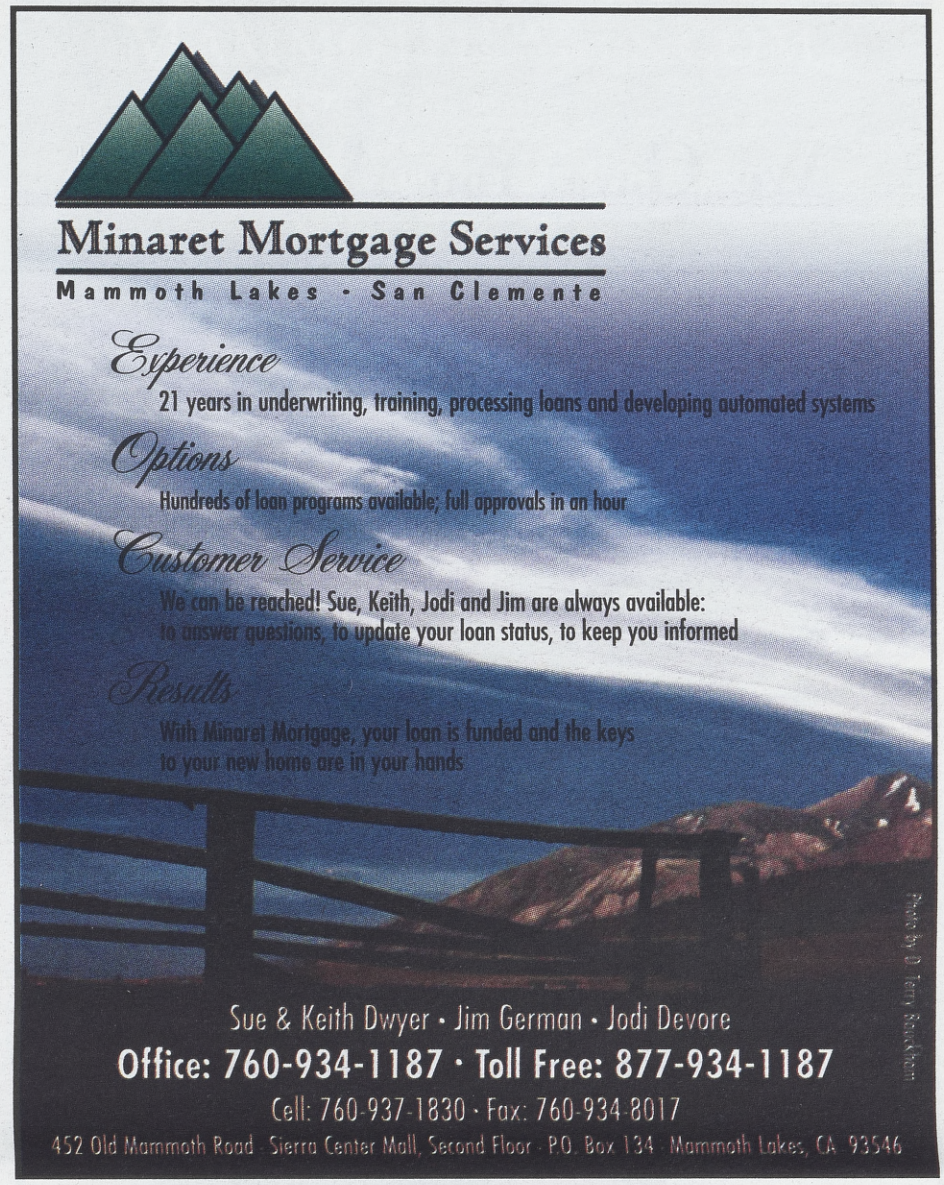
AC: Political theory fascinates me. That was always my emphasis. It was my emphasis when I did my graduate work: why people choose to govern themselves and come together, the types of government they choose and how they engage in that. Our built environment directly influences that. You live in a suburb of L.A. and you drive in to your garage with your automatic door opener, and you go into your house through the door that connects your garage to your house, and then when you go to work, you leave your garage and you drive into another garage and go in to your office. That "built" environment structures your relationship with your neighbor. And if you're not talking with your neighbor in your neighborhood, then how could you possibly want to be civically engaged and active to make it a community you want to live in?

MM: *When you were a student at Sacramento, you worked briefly as a lobbyist for Clay Jackson, who at the time was the lead California lobbyist for the American Insurance Association (AIA) and was considered the chief legislative strategist to most of the insurance industry, and who eventually was convicted of racketeering. Can you tell us a little about what your job was?*

AC: I majored in government at Sacramento and I went to work for Clay Jackson, who ultimately was tried in federal court for lobbying schemes. I was responsible for informing some of his clients with what local government was doing. I worked for Anheuser-Busch, the American Plastics Council, Proctor & Gamble and the California Grocers Association, and it was my job to see what little cities and counties, all over the state, were doing. So I'd get county supervisors' agendas, and city council agendas and planning commission agendas, and read what they were up to. Any time they were doing something that would harm any of my clients, I had to call the clients and send out the big-shot lobbyists to shut it down.

>> continued on page 10

"The political pressure ... is huge."



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Andrea Clark >> continued from page 9

MM: *Backing up a bit, can you tell us how it was that you finished high school in England?*
AC: Palmdale and Lancaster were growing by leaps and bounds. It was the first time that the community had ever dealt with a huge influx of people from L.A. And there was a really strange shift from us being a bunch of jocks out partying with a big bonfire in the middle of the desert, to where there were now lots of houses, gang-related shootings and stabbings in my school, and it was horrible. I hated being there, I hated the place. There's nothing attractive there for me, so I sought out a foreign exchange opportunity. I found some family friends who lived in England. I wrote them a letter and asked them if I could come and live with them. Then I asked my school if I could go to school there, I bought a plane ticket, went over there and went to school. And it was a wonderful, wonderful experience. It was right in the middle of England. I spent most of my time on the trains, experiencing the country and talking to people and going to pubs and rugby games and having fun.

MM: *Was that a pivotal experience for you?*
AC: I don't know if I would call it pivotal. I just needed to get out of Lancaster. I don't think there was anything there that remarkably shaped who I am, other than it probably saved my life. Minor thing.

MM: *Now that you've brought it up, what do you consider fun?*
AC: I tele-ski at the ski area as well as in the backcountry, and I like to cross country ski. I don't know how to skate-ski yet, but I want to learn. I ride my road bike sometimes, and I ran a marathon this winter. I used to race boardercross, but I've pretty much given up snowboarding, more or less. And I love to fish—fly-fish.

MM: *Fly-fishing?*
AC: It's really relaxing. I do mostly catch-and-release, but I've eaten a few fish, too. I just like to do it. I'm not very good at it, but I love the process. It's very distracting from work. You have to think about which fly to choose, what the fish want to eat, how to place your line, how to make sure your cast is right and that it's beautiful and that it looks good, and that it actually works. It's the whole process, and you're in this amazing place and it's beautiful and quiet and it's really kind of solitary … and nice. It's just a nice way to spend time. I need lots of distractions.

MM: *What are the similarities between here and Missoula?*
AC: The beauty of living in wonderful places like this is that you have a small community and you have an opportunity, in some ways, to sort of do a small social exercise or experiment, to see how people work together. We're so isolated and we have all kinds of strange, outside influences, but we get to make some choices that are not available to large communities. We get to engage with each other in ways that large population centers don't. And we're all here for a similar reason, so in some ways, the people who live in places like Mammoth, or Missoula, who are engaged in outdoor activities, can generally agree on their love for fishing or skiing. All of a sudden, we have common ground, even though when it comes to a political area they may not agree. So that opens a door for dialog, which is all you can ever really ask of people who live in a community—to talk to each other and try to understand each other's perspectives.

MM: *Of course, your job now is more than that.*
AC: Yes, and it's a little depressing when I think about the whole picture. The projections are that we're going to need 3,000 more households at buildout, whenever that is, 2015 or 2020, and that we will have an affordability problem and we will need some

level of assistance for housing. There's no way, even building 100 units a year—I'm trying to get 100 units built in the next two years, which is a huge accomplishment if we can actually do it—but if we did that every year, we'd never meet that 3,000-unit demand. So it's very grim to think about, how you actually get to that, and help people afford to live here. And I just have to keep focusing on one project at a time, because that's all we can do. As an organization, we can only do so much. We have limited resources, limited land, limited money and limited human power to try to get these things to happen. So I just have to focus on each project being a nice place to live, where year-round residents want to make a home.

MM: *At some point soon, you are going to have to figure out who gets these new units. What is going to be the system?*
AC: I have no doubt that our waiting list for units is going to be hundreds of people long, if not thousands, in a very short period of time, and right now we're trying to figure out who gets to be the first 25. How do we figure that out? How do we decide that in a fair way? Do we go on how bad your living situation is? If it's 20 people living in one place, sleeping in shifts? There are a lot of people who would like to see us go with people on tenure. That is, if they've been in town for a certain number of years, they would therefore be more deserving of a unit. Or we could go income level: let the lowest-income people go first. Or we could go by employment. So far, the only fair way I can think of doing it is some sort of lottery system to establish a waiting list.

MM: *If you don't mind me saying so, it looks like there are many more defeats on the horizon than victories.*
AC: It depends on how you view winning and losing. If it's always about winning and losing, like an election, it would be really easy to get pessimistic and not do it any more. But if you see being successful as working with people who, in the end, learn more about their neighborhood and have become more involved as a result of whatever type of action you're working on, even if it's just holding community meetings, that's success.

MM: *Do you miss Missoula?*
AC: We were looking to leave because Mike needed a change in jobs and I wanted to be closer to my family. And it was just time to move on and do something different, and Missoula was really growing too much. It's become this sprawling, urban wasteland that just got a Home Depot, and there's a Lowe's across the street from that, and it's one big-box after big-box. There's still a wonderful core downtown, but because the economy has changed so much in the region, to a retail and services hub of Western Montana, it got ugly. MM

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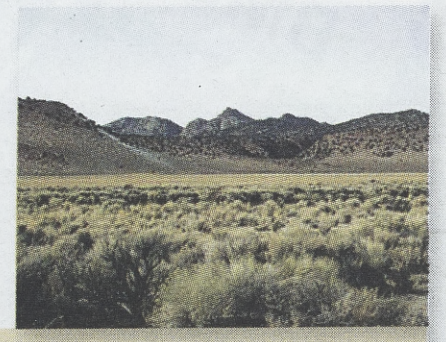

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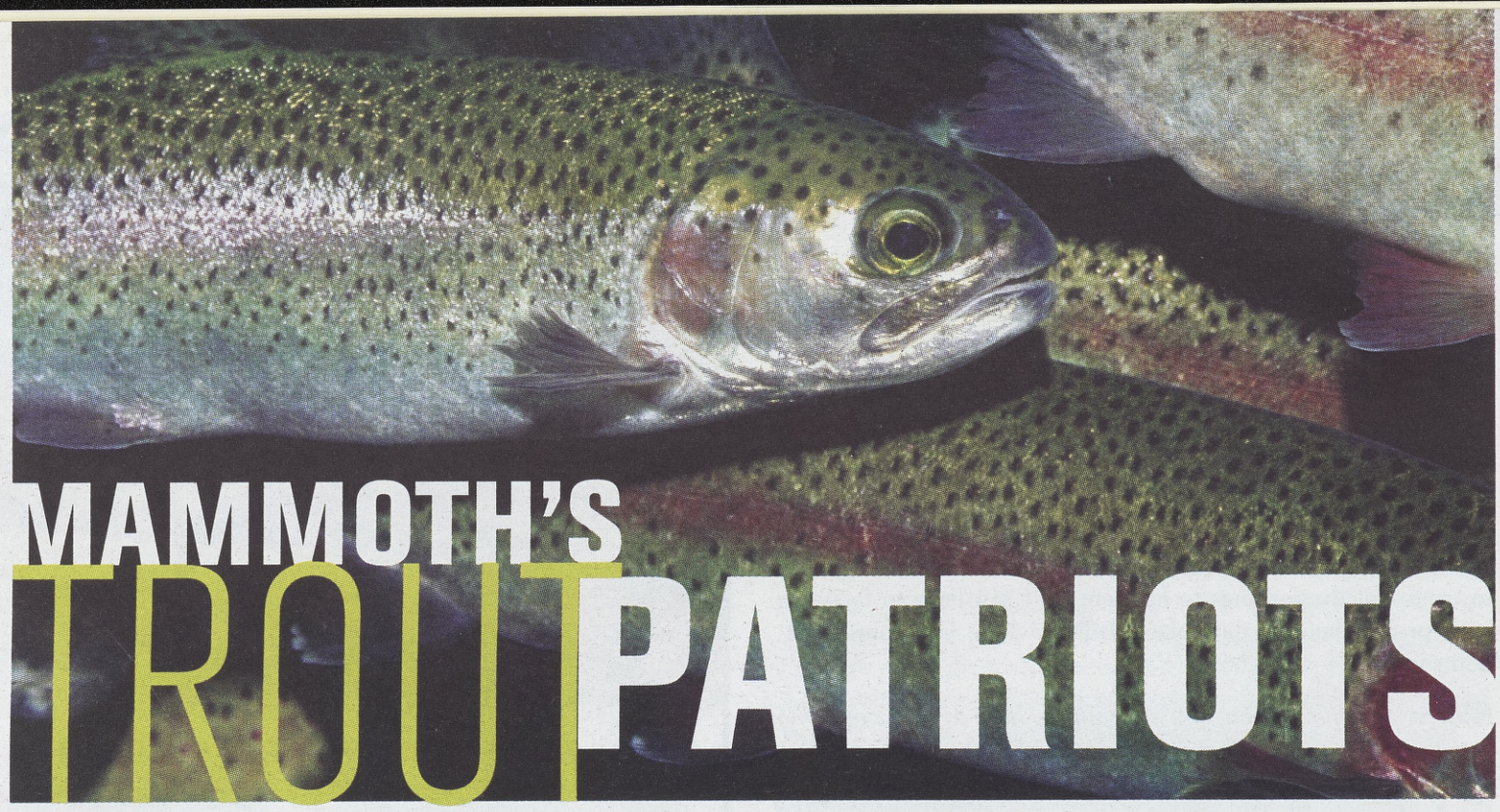


MAMMOTH'S TROUT PATRIOTS

TIM ALPERS' VOLUNTEER ARMY IS OUT TO SAVE HOT CREEK HATCHERY

BY BUMP DIAMOND

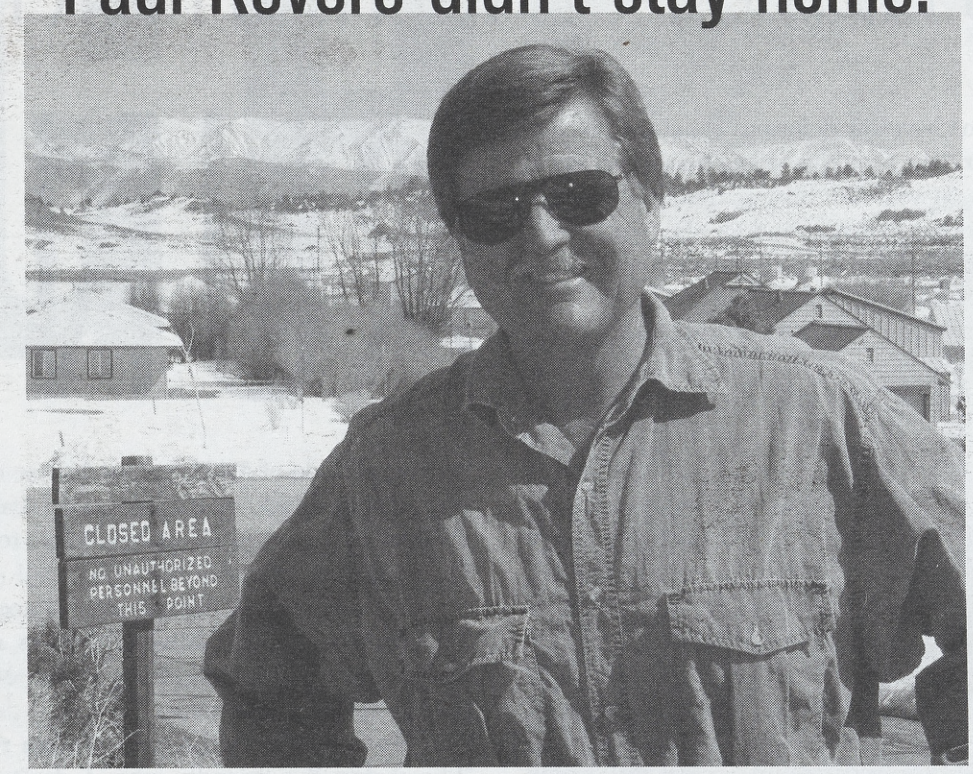
The way Tim Alpers sees it, the Hot Creek Hatchery of the future is going to be something along the lines of Disney World, except with gills. Rainbow gills, to be specific, and big, Alpers-sized rainbows, at that.

There's going to be a visitors' interpretive center there, staffed by interns participating in an aquaculture education program. Tours by the busloads will come and go. Across the way, state-of-the-art hatchery ponds will turn out "superstock trout" coveted by anglers the world over. Over there, in refurbished facilities, a for-profit egg fertilization business will rake in big bucks. Meanwhile, up the repaved road, remodeled houses on the hatchery grounds will help take some of the load off Mammoth's housing crisis while simultaneously generating rent income.

For this to come true, Alpers said all he has to do is raise $375,000 a year—for now, anyway—and get his growing army of volunteers to help him turn the entire California state trout hatchery system inside out, upside down and backwards.

"For lack of a better term," he told the Mammoth Town

"Paul Revere didn't stay home."



Council on March 3, "I guess you'd call us 'Trout Patriots.' Paul Revere didn't stay home 230 years ago."

Pressed further on his plan, which would basically split the costs of running Hot Creek Hatchery with the state, the longtime Mono County supervisor and third-generation county resident said:

"I don't believe there's any flaw in it. Conceptually, I think it's a heck of a plan and I think it's what people have wanted for 20 years. They've wanted reform in the hatcheries. It's a win-win for everybody, and I don't think it's unfair competition for the private sector, either.

"There's an insatiable appetite for trout," he said. "We need to have this hatchery in production for our visitors."

Alpers, 52, proprietor of the famous Alpers Owens River Ranch north of Mammoth, has been turning out his own trophy trout since the 1980s, when he left the college basketball coaching sidelines (he was a player at the University of Nevada and an assistant coach at Division 1 Tulsa).

In addition to hosting anglers at the ranch, Alpers contracts with various government entities—Mono County and the Town of Mammoth, for example—in "trout enhancement" programs, and he also supplies area restaurants with his signature Alpers trout.

But when the state's finances crashed last year, Fish and Game took an especially hard hit. "Our budget is shot," said the department's Denyse Racine at a Collaborative Planning Team meeting in early March. Within Fish and Game, the projected budget shortfall for hatcheries was particularly alarming. The Hot Creek Hatchery, which has run on a budget of $750,000 a year for the last 10 years, was given $375,000 for the fiscal year beginning July 1.

"In other words, they can't operate it," said Neil McCarroll, the Mammoth attorney who is chairman of the Mono County Fisheries Commission and who also is a self-styled Trout Patriot.

"We did a study that concluded that fishing injected $180 million annually in our local (Mono County) economy," he said. "But if the fish aren't there, nobody will come. They'll go to Wyoming or Nevada, or somewhere else."

Moreover, since Hot Creek Hatchery supplies the State of California with 60 percent of the eggs that are used for stocking lakes and streams, a cutback here would have repercussions for fishermen and women, and the communities that depend on them, throughout the entire state.

In response to the looming crisis, Alpers and others stepped in last summer, crafting a bold plan to create the Hot Creek Hatchery Foundation, a non-profit organization that would cover the hatchery's operating costs while the state paid for employee expenses.

The plan has the blessing of the state, so long as the new foundation can come up with the dough—the Patriots needed $28,000 by July 1 just to get started. In addition, the state has given the go-ahead to make this a two-year pilot program, Alpers said. If all goes as planned and it's a success, then the foundation can work on a series of five-year plans with the state.

"We want to show that a public-private program at the hatchery can work," he said.

It's not just an economic battle in which the Patriots are engaged, Alpers said.

"There are bureaucrats in Fish and Game who would rather see these facilities close than have private people involved," he told the Town Council, thumping the podium as he spoke.

Added McCarroll in an interview afterward: "There's an element in Fish and Game that wants the hatchery program abolished because they feel there should be only wild trout in California. This element wants to get rid of the hatcheries."

However it turns out, it's clear that this summer is the crux.

"It's heartbreaking to think that they (the state) would mothball it and close it," Alpers said. "I'm going to put my best effort into it, and if it doesn't work, the only other option is closure.

"If we succeed, great. If it closes, we'll go on, knowing that at least we tried."

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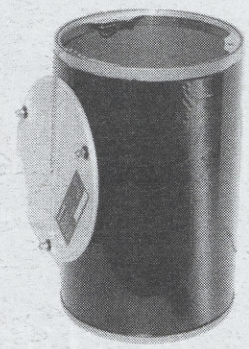

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THE BISHOP HIGH SIERRA 50 RUNNING

BY BUMP DIAMOND

Ceal Klingler doesn't have any delusions about the makeup of an ultra runner. "We have this saying that we all say to each other," the 34-year-old Bishop trail runner says. "We'll come upon each other in a race and go, 'Looking good!' But by mile 35, usually people don't look anywhere close to good.

"By then," she said, "you're three-quarters of the way through a 50-mile race, and you'd have to say that most people still out there should be institutionalized."

Klingler laughed, but not hard enough to be altogether convincing.

At the time Klingler was talking up the race, last March, she and her husband, Dr. Stacey Brown, were training for the 50-mile Bishop High Sierra 50, an annual event that is the brainchild of longtime ultra runner Marie Boyd.

The "Bishop High Sierra Run" actually encompasses three races—the 50-mile race, a 50k race, and a 20-mile race. They are staged simultaneously on one course.

The race—this year it is on May 15—begins at Millpond County Park, just north of Bishop, loops past Tungsten City, and the California Department of Forestry camp, crosses Buttermilk Road, switchbacks up to Bishop Creek Lodge, then sends runners back toward the start for another two loops. It uses mostly dirt roads in the Inyo National Forest, occasionally hits snow banks and frequently takes runners into the open for spectacular views of the Owens Valley and the High Sierra.

It is grueling by any ordinary standard. A marathon is less than half the distance of the Bishop 50, with nowhere near the elevation gain. By the time the runners finish (the cutoff time is 8 P.M.) the finishers will have climbed to 9,385 feet from the starting altitude of 4,425 feet, and some of them will have been slogging along for up to 14 hours. Last year, the last-place finisher came in at 14:15, and six others took more than 13 hours to complete the thing.

This is great fun, though, at least according to Klingler and her pal Boyd, whom, Klingler said, is mostly responsible for making this race a set piece of the Mammoth-Bishop high country spring sports scene.

"Marie embodies the sport of ultra running," Klingler said. "She makes it a friendly race. I don't ordinarily like racing; I'd prefer trail running. But her race is incredibly friendly."

One of the reasons that Boyd, 55, produces such a friendly race—if, indeed, a 50-mile race can ever be considered "friendly"—is because she knows what "non-friendly" is all about. In fact, the Bishop 50 grew out of the old Mammoth Mountain Marathon.

"At that time, the course had been poorly marked," said Boyd, a native Australian, "and the aid stations had virtually no supplies, especially for those of us who are a little slower.

G HIGH

"I got to one aid station just as the lady who was sitting there was getting ready to leave. She had absolutely nothing left. She had no water and I still had four miles to go, and when I finally got to the finish line there were just a couple of cans of warm soft drink left. I said, 'I can do a better job than this.'"

Eleven years later, the Bishop 50 has well-stocked aid stations, plenty of water at the end and a big sponsor in the Northern Inyo Hospital.

Over the last eight years, volunteers from the hospital and Boyd—she is a surgical nurse—have raised $30,000 for the hospital's foundation, along with donations to Inyo County Search and Rescue and the Salvation Army.

Yet that still doesn't quite explain why she and her husband, 62-year-old Andy Boyd, keep running.

"We enjoy being able to get out in beautiful surroundings on challenging trail and being able to take a lot longer to go a longer distance, rather than, say, running for an hour in a 10-kilometer race."

She paused, then added, "I also think we take a perverse pleasure in being able to do something that probably 99 percent of the population in our age group cannot do."

The most grueling race Boyd ever ran, however, was not the Bishop 50, nor last November's 24-hour "San Diego 1-Day," the National Track & Field Ultra Championship at UC San Diego, where she finished 52nd overall and won her age group (55-59). Nor was it either of her two Western States 100s, the race from Lake Tahoe to Auburn.

Rather, Boyd in 2001 got mixed up in perhaps the most punishing 100-mile race in the U.S. That would be Utah's Wasatch Front 100-Mile Endurance Run, held each year on the first weekend after Labor Day. It is the final endurance run of a brutal "Grand Slam" that also includes the Western States 100. The run stretches from Layton, Utah to Midway, Utah with a cumulative elevation gain of an astounding 26,882 feet.

In this particular race, Boyd, then 52, ran for 38 straight hours, hoping along the way that she could clear the cutoff times established at each aid station.

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After 38 hours, she made the last aid station, only to be told that she had missed the last cutoff time by mere minutes.

"They said, 'Hop in the van and we'll take you on in,' but I said, 'No, I'm not coming all this way to Utah, then making it to within seven miles, and not finish."

Officially, Boyd was finished. Unofficially, and without support, she ran the final seven miles to complete the race on her own.

"It was the longest I'd ever been moving forward," she said. "I'd completed five 100-mile races before that, but that was the one that I think I really had to dig down the deepest to finish. It was 38 hours. I'd never gone that far before, time-wise. It was without a doubt the toughest race I'd ever done."

Boyd's story about her Utah adventure corroborates Klingler's assertion that ultra racers maybe ought to do themselves a favor and have their heads examined. But Klingler can't get past just how gracious the Bishop 50 experience is.

"Marie has also completed a host of interesting events as a runner, as crew for other runners, as a race director and as an organizer of informal trail running events.

"In other words, Marie not only participates in ultra running, but she also enriches the sport and has, I think, lured many trail runners into racing, and many runners into trail running."

That's a nice thought for runners to hang on to when they reach the 29.4-mile mark at Bishop Creek Lodge.

At that point, they only have 20.6 more miles to go.

A Meditation

Snow, water and a warm, spring day in

BY ANDY SELTERS

Today I'll go up alone. It's spring. The snow is dwindling, safe and reliable, and I will head up a nearby mountain and schuss back down.

In general, these sorts of mountaineering games are about expansion, taking myself beyond the norm. Today, though, I'm not looking to expand my descent list. The sky, snow and slope are familiar enough that this is not an adventure into uncertainty. It's an exercise, a practice, and a meditation.

I stretch the skins onto the skis, rub sun cream onto cheeks and ears, flick up the heel risers and work my legs up the slope. The dawn snow is still a scratchy pavement. Patches of earth and leaves are showing through. The mantle of winter is on its way out, a percentage more every day. When the sun starts melting the surface into slurry, it'll be time to ride back down.

There were days when I would do these spring circuits and feel like I'd conquered something. Five hundred wiggles along a line down a big mountain, and, hey, that's something that an urban eye can marvel at. But a score of springs have tired that game out of me, and today the spirit of expansion calls for a more limitless attitude.

Today I'm engaging a deeper essence, alone with the snow. It's about the basics of taking my life onto the earth and into the sky. It's about expanding into the space above to see what comes down.

Today my instinct is to ask, what is this snow? So many vectors in the Eastern Sierra point to water, and I want to go where my thoughts will roam the sky. I want to see if the snow will reveal how it goes from a base for skiing to everyone's water.

The same stuff that filled the skies with mist in December, swirled over the peaks as powder in January, and hung in icicles off the cliffs in March is now a tenacious crust of crystals that by lunchtime will start to fill streams, nourish roots, and rise toward leaves.

Far below in the Owens Valley, I can trace the artery that bleeds this elixir of existence toward that big ganglion of human frenzy far to the south.

A couple of hours and 3,000 feet up, I stop and guzzle water from my bottle. Then I refill it with snow that the sun on my pack will turn to liquid before my next stop. Already the surface is soft enough for my hand to sweep up some slurry. Better get going, resume the methodical push: ski slide, pole place, ski slide, up.

This stuff under my skis is the original mystical compound, the most dynamic and taken-for-granted substance we know of. Eons ago, it became the basis for the only life that we can imagine: the most universal component of all the membranes, lubricants, metabolites and messengers in my climbing body.

Infused with soul, the same molecules have no doubt been the moisture in a kiss, as well as the blood on a battlefield.

Assigning it a name was our original mistake. Water is infinitely more than just water. With no taste or smell of its own, it's

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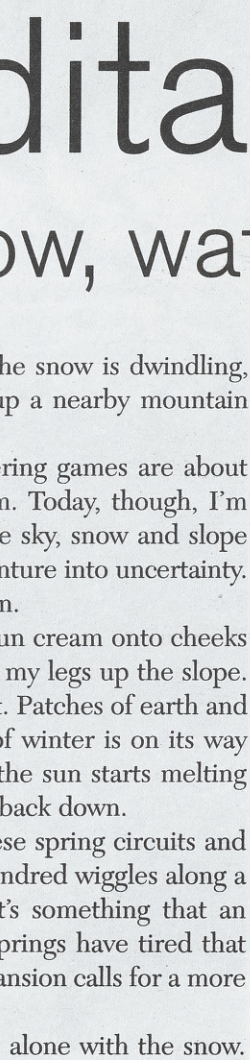

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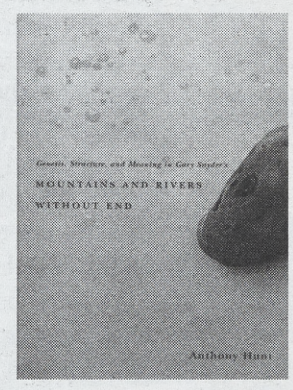
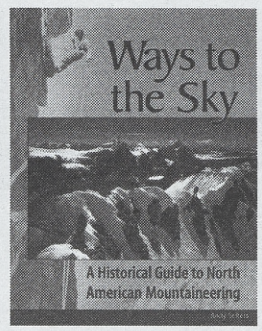


Author and preeminent Gary Snyder scholar Anthony Hunt visits Bishop to discuss his new work, *Genesis, Structure & Meaning in Gary Snyder's Mountains and Rivers Without End*. "... rewarding reading for anyone who enjoys the contemplation of Snyder's artistry and ideas ... as well as those readers of poetry–whether ecologists, Buddhists, philosophers, or backpackers – who are interested in cultural and intellectual affairs." *(U.N. Press)*

Refreshments served; donation to ICA requested



June 25, Inyo Council for the Arts
Theater Room, 6:30 p.m.

Join us for a **book launch party** to celebrate the publication of local author & photographer **Andy Selters' new book**, *Ways to the Sky*. Andy will speak about the process of creating this book, followed by a question and answer session & an opportunity to get an autographed copy of the book.

Refreshments served; donation to ICA requested

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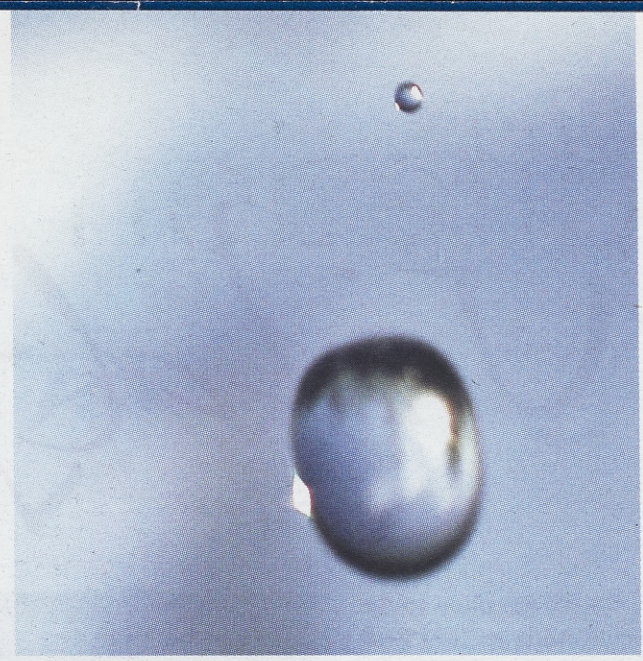
lay in the mountains



also much less than we can imagine. It's the essence that simultaneously, around the world, is too rare, too plentiful, and, only with endless management, occasionally the right amount. The water we can point to is never the substance that is.

Another hour and a half and I gain the ridge; it is not much further to the top. Now I can look over new mountains, invisible from anywhere but up high—the High Sierra belt, the west side. These lofty cirques and basins feed the San Joaquin River.

Through satellite telemetry and surveys on skis and snowcat, the white blanket here is one of the most scrutinized snowpacks in the world. For in the haze farther west sits the most valuable agricultural valley in the world.

From up here, the lowland networks of freeways and work stations are just a rumor. Down there, where the primal conditions for life are temperate and easy, strife and pollution are the norm. Up here, where life is a struggle, I pull off my sweaty shirt, sit back on a warm summit rock, and drink from my bottle of snowmelt.

I'd love to say I'm not of that world down there. I wish I could say that's not me. No way will I commute on the 405; no way will I work with a goal of spending a day at the mall. But I'd be lying to say I have no business there. I rip the wrapping off of a nutrition bar and chew it with gusto. Calorie deficit looms no matter how much I eat today.

Just what is this water—both the snowpack and the essence of this backcountry seeker—doing up here? It's carrying messages between Heaven and Earth. The water that evaporated into the sky, built into clouds and now rests as snow left behind all of its salts and enzymes and most of its impurities, and settled here on the peaks.

It's gone through this cycle a zillion times. In those cycles it's coursed through a zillion living creatures, and after an infinite number of circuits, it has infused its message into us: up high, on the peaks, in the sky; where you go to find renewal.

Where else might we have gotten our universal regard for mountains, except from the substance within us that's made the journey up again and again?

Where else might we have gotten the ideal of living fully on our life's path, except from the substance that's flowed downhill again and again, nourishing all things on its way?

Timing is everything, and it's time to go. Rip off the skins, flick down the heel risers, point the skis down. One more swig of water before I'm off.

Swish, arc, swish, carve. A cool skin of sweat evaporates in the breeze as I follow the downhill slopes, fast and sure, tracing the timeless path of water.

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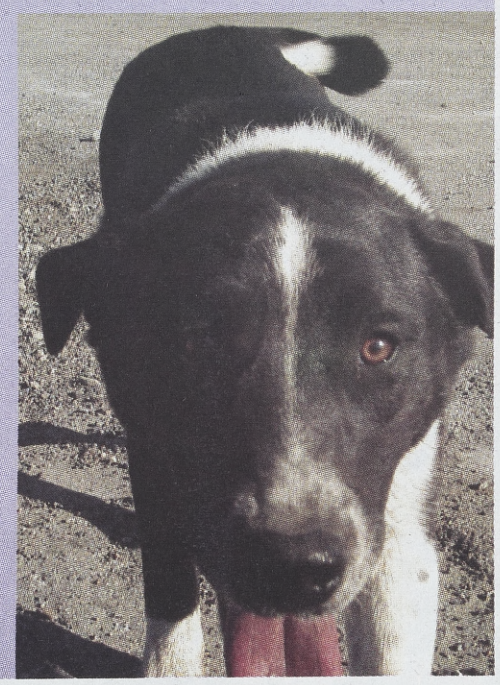


If you have what it takes to love Maggie, please call Emily at the Whitmore Shelter at 760-935-4734 or visit the shelter, just south of Mammoth Lakes on Benton Crossing Road off Hwy. 395 (by the Green Church), Tues. through Sat., 10 A.M.-NOON and 1 P.M.-5 P.M.

Wildflow

STORY AND PHOTOS BY STEPHEN INGRAM

Ever since John Muir brought the world's attention to the beauty and diversity of the Sierra Nevada in "My First Summer in the Sierra," other naturalists and botanists have celebrated the diversity of this region's flowering plants.

California has an especially rich collection of native plants, and the Sierra Nevada, from western foothills to eastern deserts, accounts for about half of our state's 6,000 plant species.

Two factors that contribute to the Eastern Sierra's diversity of wildflowers are its local habitat diversity and the broader confluence here of three floristic regions: the Mojave Desert, the Great Basin Desert and the Sierra Nevada. These factors are related, but each has its separate effect on the local plant communities and wildflowers we see here. Muir recognized the influence of climate and habitat diversity on vegetation, and he articulated his observations as only John Muir could—both spiritually and scientifically.

"Looking up the cañon from the warm sunny edge of the Mono
is the change in the vegetation and climate. ... the snow round the a
only about four miles away, and between lie specimen zo
In little more than an hour one may swoop down from winte

—John Muir, "My First Summ

The Mojave Desert, which extends north into the Owens Valley, endows the Eastern Sierra region with plants that are more commonly found to the south. Most naturalists put the northwest extent of the Mojave Desert somewhere around the Alabama Hills, but a few wildflowers characteristic of the Mojave, such as Mojave aster *(Xylorhiza tortifolia)* and Venus blazing star *(Mentzelia nitens)*, stretch further north into the northern Owens Valley and the Volcanic Tablelands.

Venus blazing star was the annual, yellow "star" of last spring's stunning, extended wildflower bloom on the Tablelands just north of Bishop. Another Mojavean species that produces spectacular displays on the lower slopes of the Eastside, most notably at Division Creek, is Inyo bush lupine *(Lupinus excubitus)*. This sweetly fragrant shrub, also known as grape soda lupine, is one of the first to appear after a fire, and it persists in colorful, massive displays for a few years until other longer-lived shrubs replace it.

Sierra primrose

The edge of Muir's "torrid region," the Great Basin Desert, lies at the foot of the eastern slopes of the central and northern Sierra and stretches north to Oregon, east to Wyoming, and southeast to where Arizona, Nevada, and Utah meet. The plant species of the Great Basin "sagebrush country" reach up the slopes to around

Alpine paintbrush

E R R A A S A

ver Canvas

e of the Mono plain my morning ramble seems a dream, so great
v round the arctic gardens at the summit of the pass is plainly visible,
e specimen zones of all the principal climates of the globe.
n from winter to summer, from an arctic to a torrid region…"

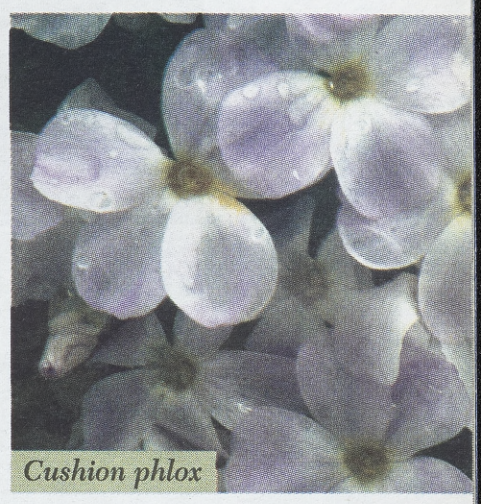
My First Summer in the Sierra"

7,000 feet, and contribute significantly to the species diversity of the region. Desert peach *(Prunus andersonii)* and purple sage *(Salvia dorrii)*, are two colorful shrubs that are among the first to bloom here. Two common yellow wildflowers of the middle elevation slopes of the Eastern Sierra, best appreciated in McGee Canyon, include arrow-leaf balsamroot *(Balsamorhiza sagittata)* and mule's ears *(Wyethia mollis)*.

The Sierra is also home to plant species that are widespread throughout California or that are found in mountainous areas of the West. The alpine environment is harsh and the plants of these habitats—herbs and low-growing, compact shrubs—have a very short growing season. Muir's "arctic gardens" don't usually begin blooming until June or later. Depending on soil type (if any) and water availability, common wildflowers range from cushion phlox *(Phlox condensata)* and alpine paintbrush *(Castilleja nana)* in dry sites to the early-blooming alpine buttercup *(Ranunculus eschscholtzii)* and late-blooming gentians of wet areas.

Alpine gold

Some of the biggest and brightest flowers of subalpine habitats include rock fringe *(Epilobium obcordatum)*, Sierra primrose *(Primula suffrutescens)*, and mountain pride *(Penstemon newberryi)*. The wildflowers that get the prize for largest and brightest at highest elevations are alpine gold *(Hulsea algida)* and sky pilot *(Polemonium eximium)*.



Cushion phlox

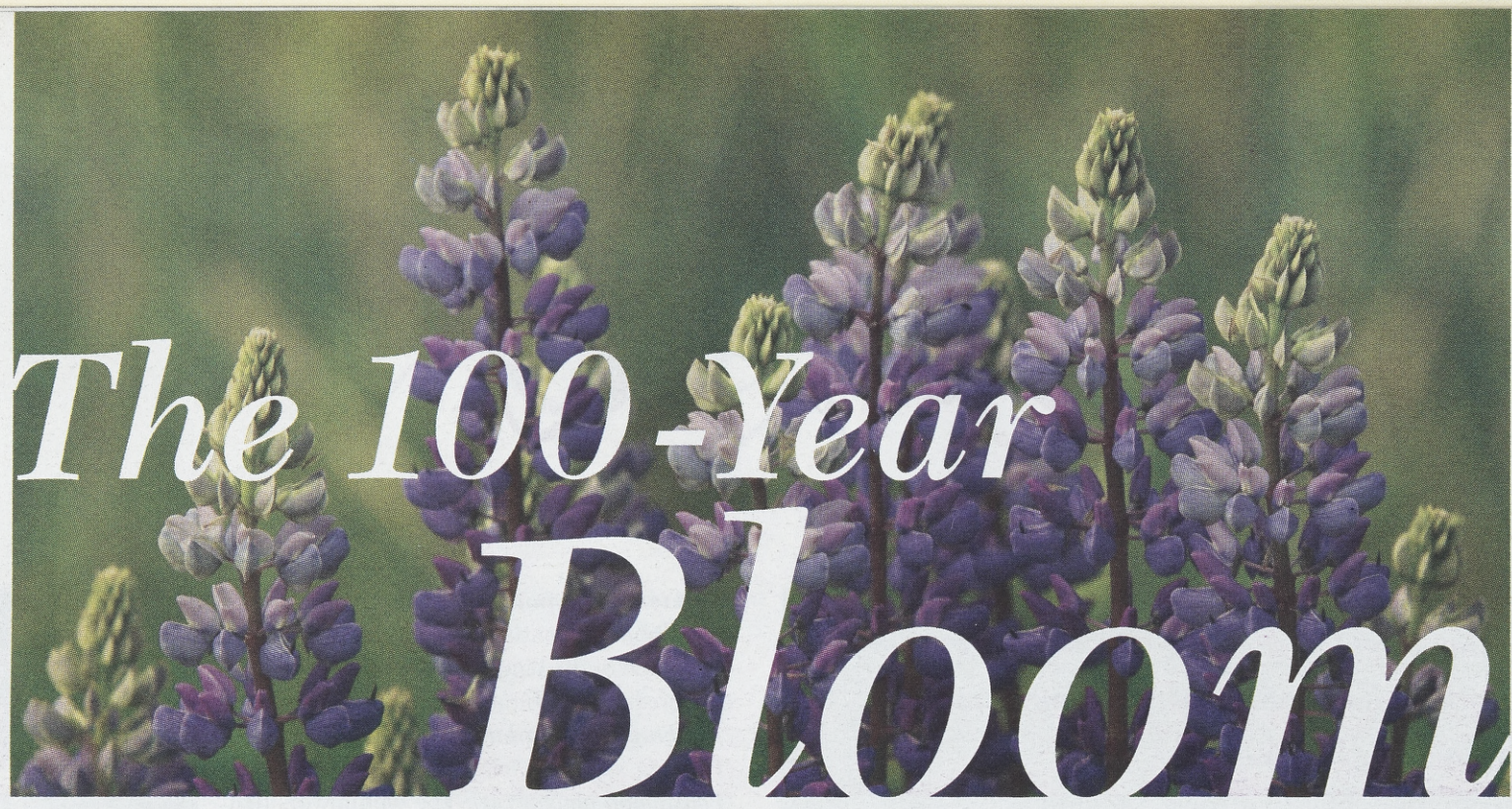
If the three floristic regions are thought of as three primary colors of paint to work with on the canvas of the Eastern Sierra, then the habitats are where the plant colors become blended in a variety of ways.

What John Muir could see "in little more than an hour" in Bloody Canyon ranged from alpine meadows through riparian woodlands, coniferous forest and mountain meadows down to sagebrush scrub.

The rain shadow cast by the Sierra and the steep, varied topography of the Eastside slopes both help create the remarkable array of plant habitats found in such close proximity.

In "A Sierra Nevada Flora," Norman Weeden wrote that "the diversity of habitats thus produced is unsurpassed elsewhere in the continental United States."

If we can learn to see the wildflowers as ecological expressions of the region's climate and local terrain, then maybe we'll realize the grandeur John Muir felt on his botanical rambles.



The 100-Year Bloom

LAST YEAR WAS ONE FOR THE BOOKS

BY WENDI GRASSESCHI

Walking across the sienna sands of the Eastern Sierra's Volcanic Tablelands last spring at dusk, the usually dry desert air had a thick, warm, golden, sweet texture.

The desert ground, usually sere and brown, had exploded into a kaleidoscope of colors. Blanketing the ground, horizon to horizon, were rain-drenched flowers: brilliant, gold Venus blazing stars; pale lavender phacelias; flaming indigo bush; lemon-yellow popcorn flowers and deep purple lupines.

What's more, this flagrant bloom, already an embarrassment of riches, lasted for months and months.

Locals in Mammoth and the Eastern Sierra called the spring of 2003 the "100-Year Bloom" and went flower crazy. Even old-timers—those who had been here 80 years or more—said they had never seen anything like it.

So it was that in May, when they took up their last stand on the Volcanic Tablelands above Bishop, the blooms of the yellow Venus blazing star, by all accounts the highlight of the spring show, were so thick they looked like a giant carpet of gold stretching from Bishop to Benton.

Things never really calmed down until late June, when the

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heat sent the petals back down to earth, the photographers went home, and the desert once again went back to being a desert—to sleep, one would think, for another 100 years.

But maybe not.

Because of another exceptionally rainy fall and winter, many local flower experts are hoping that the bloom of 2003 might be followed by something unprecedented—another similar bloom in 2004.

But first, a lot of things have to go perfectly one more time, as Bureau of Land Management botanist Anna Halford explained.

"There are up to 4,000 flower seeds per square meter out there just waiting, all that potential just waiting," Halford said. "Botanists call these annuals the racehorses of the plant world, because of their ability to go from seed to flower in a remarkably short time. But unlike perennials, such as sagebrush and the other plants that dominate the Great Basin in normal years, the annuals such as you saw last year are very temperamental.

"To actually bloom, they need several things to happen, and in the right order and in the right amount.

"First, most flowers require about an inch of rain to germinate, and the rain has to come at the right time, optimally in fall or early winter, as happened last year," she said.

"The reason an inch is needed is because most flowers have what botanists call germination inhibitors. Germination inhibitors function as brakes on a seed—the seed won't germinate until there is enough water to make it worth the risk of sprouting. More than an inch of water actually leaches the soil enough to break down the chemical inhibitors on the seeds," she said.

Halford said some seeds also have mechanical inhibitors that must be broken down before they can bloom. They might need to be rolled down a wash by a flash flood and scarred so that their seed cover is cracked before they can germinate. Or a seed might have to move through the gut of an animal to break down.

"Once these hurdles are crossed," she said, "optimal temperature for seed germination and plant growth is from 70 to 80 degrees, and these types of temperatures need to remain relatively stable over a few months' time. Then the bees, beetles and other pollinators need to show up.

"What was so amazing about last spring was not just the profusion of flowers, it was the fact that it was unusually rainy and relatively cool all through May."

Could it happen this year?

"We have already had more than enough rain this year, and even better, it came in the fall, as well as the winter," she said. "As long as it doesn't get too hot too soon, and the wind doesn't blow too much, this year could be as good—even better."

WHERE AND WHEN TO FIND WHAT KIND OF BLOOMS

April Mojave Desert species already in bloom. Good places include Alabama Hills, Tungsten Hills, Sherwin slope and Volcanic Tablelands. Look for purple and white sand blossoms *(Linanthus parryae)*, evening snow *(L. dichotomous)*, Venus blazing star *(Mentzelia nitens)*, purple mat *(Nama aretioides)*, and numerous gilias.

May In Round Valley, look for Western blue flag *(Iris missouriensis)*, Inyo bush lupine *(Lupinus excubitus)* blooming on slopes above Owens Valley. Sherwin slope has purple sage *(Salvia dorrii)*, desert peach *(Prunus andersonii)* and desert paintbrush *(Castilleja angustifolia)* and some buckwheats *(Eriogonum spp.)*. Volcanic Tablelands still full of wildflowers.

June At the 7,000-8,000-foot level, in places such as McGee Canyon, Mammoth Lakes and Mono Basin, look for mule's ears *(Wyethia mollis)*, balsam-root *(Balsamorhiza sagittata)*, skunky monkeyflower *(Mimulus mephiticus)*, and Mono Lake lupine *(Lupinus duranii)*. Higher elevations in the Sierra have mountain heather *(Cassiope mertensiana)*, other heath family relatives, and mountain pride *(Penstemon newberryi)*.

July In the High Sierra, most flowering plants are in bloom now. Look for a wide variety of wildflowers in meadow areas. Plants along the local trails include fireweed *(Epilobium angustifolium)*, dwarf lupine *(L. lepidus)*, larkspur *(Delphinium spp.)*, whorled penstemon *(Penstemon heterodoxus)* and many others.

August Look for the High Sierra's late bloomers, such as hiker's gentian *(Gentianopsis simplex)* and alpine gentian *(Gentiana newberryi)*. Most alpine species are still in bloom.

The Bristlecone Chapter of the California Native Plant Society has many local field trips that are scheduled to see flowers at their best. All 2004 trips are posted on the chapter website at www.bristleconecnps.org, and all are welcome.

–Stephen Ingram

The BIGGEST BASH in the BASIN

Beauty pageants, horse swimming and a missing bust in "Mark Twain Days"

BY STACEY MITCHELL

There was a time, back in the '30s, when the people of Lee Vining put down their work and gave their town over to Mark Twain.

Not literally, of course, but given the efforts of local merchants, area do-gooders and the earnest civic-minded, maybe you'd have thought the famous American author had loved this place dearly.

Indeed, back when "Mark Twain Days" was a highlight of the Lee Vining summer, those who didn't know better probably thought Twain was brokenhearted to return to Virginia City to pursue writing.

So to celebrate Twain's days here, there were speedboat races on Mono Lake. There was a beauty pageant. There was art and sculpture, a big Hollywood influence and, most of all, there were parties that people still talk about to this day.

And then it was gone.

After just 11 years, the original Mark Twain Days died. There was an effort to revive the bash, but it didn't work out.

The bust of Twain disappeared—and no one quite has the definitive story on how that happened—and Lee Vining went back to the way it always was.

Still and all, once you know the story, it's hard to drive through the little town on the edge of Mono Lake on a summer day without thinking back…

Mark Twain came to Mono County while he was a gold and silver miner for six months in 1862. Most of his time was spent in Aurora, Nevada, just east of Bodie, but he also prospected extensively in Mono County. He spent a summer here when it apparently snowed on or near the Fourth of July. Twain—Samuel Clemens was his real name—was one of many who hoped to make his fortune in mining. But after six months of prospecting in Aurora and Mono County, he headed to Virginia City to focus on journalism, a profession only slightly less intangible than mining for gold and silver.

He certainly didn't seem to have a lot of fond memories. He mostly recorded hard-knock mining days. He wrote of Mono Lake:

"It is one of the strangest freaks of Nature to be found in any land, but it is hardly ever mentioned in print and very seldom visited."

Twain had also warned that any woman in the Mono Basin "cannot hope to be prepared for all emergencies unless she takes her fan under one arm and her snowshoes under the other."

Seventy years after Twain left, Mono Inn owner Venita McPherson was trying to think of a good event to throw at her place of business.

Known already for her parties at the Inn, she got together with Fox Paramount Studios in Hollywood and came up with the

idea of Mark Twain Days. In those days, parties in the Mono Basin made front-page news in the weekly Bridgeport Chronicle-Union, but Mark Twain Days would be the party of all parties.

The way McPherson had it planned, the film studio would assist in the promotion of the festival.

Promoting Mono County was not a new idea at the time. Mono County used to publish full-page ads in newspapers, bragging about the amazing trout fishing. But fishless, saline Mono Lake needed another angle to attract visitors.

For the inaugural event, a bust of Twain was to be sculpted with the help of Fox Paramount Studios. The famous sculptor Carlo Romanelli from Southern California was commissioned for the job.

Locals built the base for the bust from silver and gold, and it was described at the time as particularly "exquisite."

However, after the bust was completed, McPherson was asked to pay $100 to $5,000, depending on the source. Fox and McPherson apparently had not agreed upon the large sum in advance.

There are reports that Fox only brought up Romanelli's plaster mold, and not an actual bronze or marble bust, which would have cost considerably more. McPherson considered keeping the plaster mold, but she was told that it would disintegrate. The final likeness of Twain was never made, and no one knows exactly what happened to Romanelli's plaster mold.

Speedboat races became the highlight event of Mark Twain Days, and racers came from all over the West to participate.

In addition, there was a barbecue, three-legged races, sack races, 100-yard dashes, rowboat races, swimming races and, of course, that old favorite of the time, horse swimming races.

The beauty contest was a popular event, and in 1929, Miss Fales Hot Springs of Bridgeport won first place; Miss El Mono took second and Miss Mono Inn won third place.

As one year followed another, minor changes were added. The Boulder Cup became known as the first prize, and awards were given not only for the "beauty" prize, but also to contestants with the "best personality."

Lily Mathieu La Braque of Lee Vining was five years old when she won third prize in the "Prettiest Little Girl" segment of the 1932 pageant. She recalls to this day her award—a silver dollar.

Mark Twain Days ended after 11 years. By the early 1940s, practically all the young men in the Basin were headed off to the Second World War and the emphasis on big, Gatsbyesque parties was no longer fashionable.

La Braque said there was an effort to revive Mark Twain Days about 15 years ago, but it didn't get off the ground.

"Everyone now wants to make money," she said, "and there was no money-making in Mark Twain Days. Just good ol' fun."

PINE BEETLE

by TOM URBAN

Bubbles of bronze
Sap annealed by the sun
Mark the wound the entry sign
That flags the bark burrow
Of the Pine Beetle

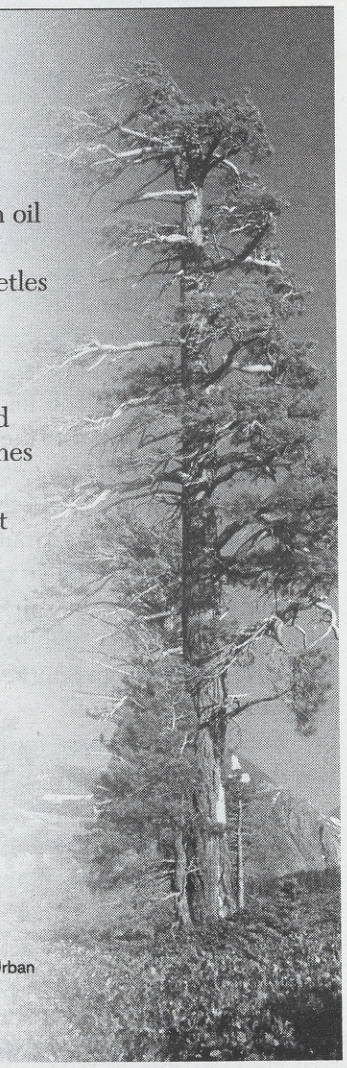
I pick at a sap scab
Insert a thin blade
Breaking in on a hibernation
To extract a whorled black worm
Soft with a slow pulse

And occult bacteria
That would desert the incubus
Corrupt the juice veins starve the needles
That in spring will signal like yellow semaphores
From the thatch roofs of plague

Why should I care me
Searching a thousand pine acres
As a mist of moths in July
Like a hatch of thistle seed
Floats to new flesh

Stands I will cut then douse with oil
While a myriad sap bubbles
Ooze from a thicket of trunks beetles
Swelling around me
In their new bark beds

Why do I urge to prevent or amend
To set things straight among my pines
Chase the delusion hubris
That denies the universal hibernant
The release from just giving in



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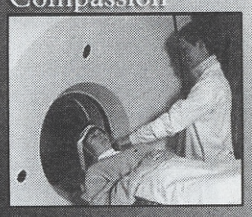

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DEENA'S KEY TO FITNESS: SLEEP

BY BUMP DIAMOND

It's a spring day in Mammoth, and Deena Drossin Kastor is training. The U.S. Olympic Trials for the marathon were on the near horizon, and after that, the Summer Olympics in Athens.

For America's top female distance runner and her teammates on the Mammoth-based Running USA team, these are the days that count the most. Thus Kastor, who recently married Snowcreek Athletic Club trainer Andrew Kastor, was obviously focused:

On sleep.

"Sometimes you get in the cycle of not resting," she said in an interview in the pair's comfortable home near Chair 15, "and it's hard to teach yourself to rest again."

So how much sleep does an Olympic-caliber distance runner need?

Kastor, who also is a firm believer in massage therapy for her muscles and an extensive stretching regimen, said she tries to get 12 to 15 hours of sleep each day, which includes an afternoon nap.

This sleep discipline is built into a routine of 140 miles of running a week, along with work in the weight room.

"People are underrested and never overtrained," she said during a break in her routine.

"So many people say they can't sleep at night, which is a typical sign of overtraining," she said. "But to me, it's a typical sign of underresting. We (Running USA) have one of the hardest training programs in the country. We're militant when it comes to training. Most of the friends I know on the racing circuit do two hard workouts a week, and we do two easy days a week.

"We're not breaking down and getting injured, because our coach (Bob Larsen) makes sure that the time in between, we're taking care of ourselves, with rest and daily massages."

The results of this kind of training are impressive.

Kastor, 31, won the 2001 New York City Marathon in 2:26:58, the fastest debut time by an American woman in the history of the race. (Scott Larson won the men's division that year, when the New York marathon also doubled as the U.S. Marathon Championships).

The next year, Kastor set the world record for 5k on the roads (14:54), set the American record for 10,000 meters (30:50:32), won the 8k race at the U.S. Cross Country Championships, and won the silver medal at the World Cross Country Championships, also an 8k race.

Last season, Kastor set the American women's marathon record of 2:21:16, placing third in the Flora London Marathon. She won the U.S. 10k and 8k titles outright, then added a championship at the Bolder Boulder (Colo.) 10k race. She closed out her impressive season by winning the silver medal at the World Cross Country Championships.

No wonder Kastor needs all the rest she can get. But it must be the right kind of rest, she said.

"Resting doesn't mean going out to a coffee shop and drinking a cappuccino, or going to the store and buying your groceries," she said.

"Resting means getting on the couch in the middle of the day, putting a blanket over you and actually sleeping. Resting isn't checking your email or talking on the phone. Resting is getting off your legs and actually getting some sleep time.

"There are hormones and chemicals that are released in your body when you're sleeping that aid in recovery. To sleep a lot will help you recover more."

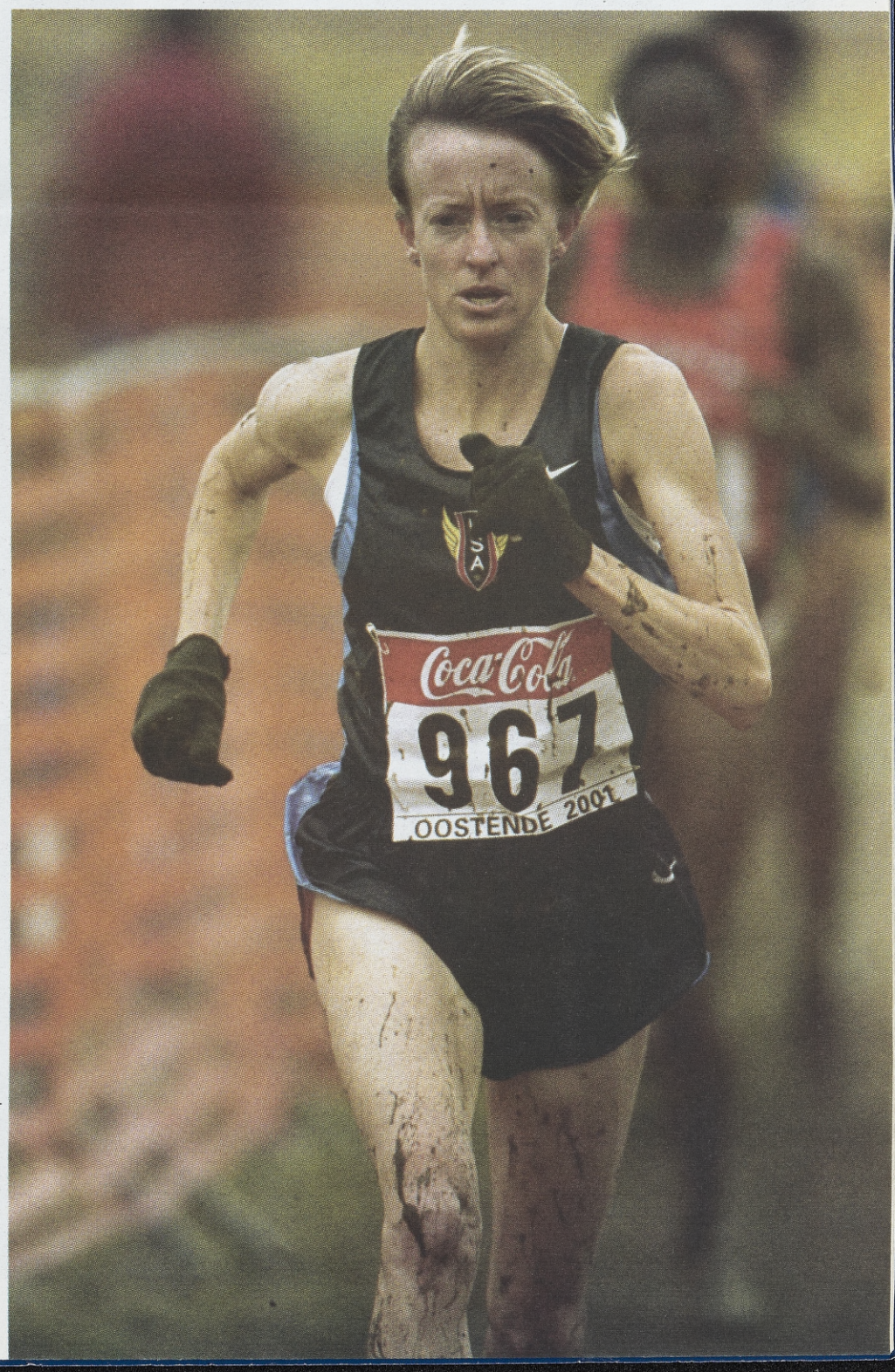
As she prepares for the Olympic trials, she said she typically works a regimented week of twice-a-day workouts that feature tempo runs, repeats (wind sprints), long, slow runs and, in the winter, occasional snowshoe or cross country ski workouts.

Occasionally she leaves Mammoth for the Running USA facility in San Diego, where she can get away from daily routines that interrupt her sleep-workout-sleep cycle.

"When I go down to the training center, I don't do anything. Sometimes I don't even bring a car. Those trips are to reset my circuits."

In the meantime, the Kastors' routine in Mammoth continues, aiming ultimately at the Summer Games, where Kastor, Olympic marathon qualifier Meb Keflezighi—he also lives in Mammoth—and other members of the team are hoping that their long preparation will result in medals. For Kastor, sleep is one of the keys.

"It's pretty taxing," she said of her training, "so I'm sleeping as much as I can."



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Booze, Brothels & Bishop

HISTORY ACCORDING TO RAY MILOVICH

BY ANDREA TETRICK

It's story time in Bishop, and Ray Milovich has the floor. "I talked to a whiskey salesman once, from Young Market," he said. "I was down at the Beacon (a favorite local hangout, boasting a restaurant, bar and dance hall, south of town on Highway 395) and he says, 'What in the hell goes on in this town?'"

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Well, this town is only about 2,500 people."

"Yeah?" Milovich said.

"You know that I sell as much Early Times whiskey in this town of 2,500 people than I do in any town in California of 55,000 people?" the whiskey salesman said. "I still can't figure out where they're going with all this booze."

Milovich slowly reeled in the anecdote, like he would a fishing line, grinning the whole time.

"Seven whorehouses, about seven times more whiskey than any other place in the state. If you wanted a stool in the bar, you had to stand in line until somebody fell off the damn thing so you could get it. You talk about bar business—let me tell you, they were busy!"

Ray added, "Yet we only had four cops—four fat old men."

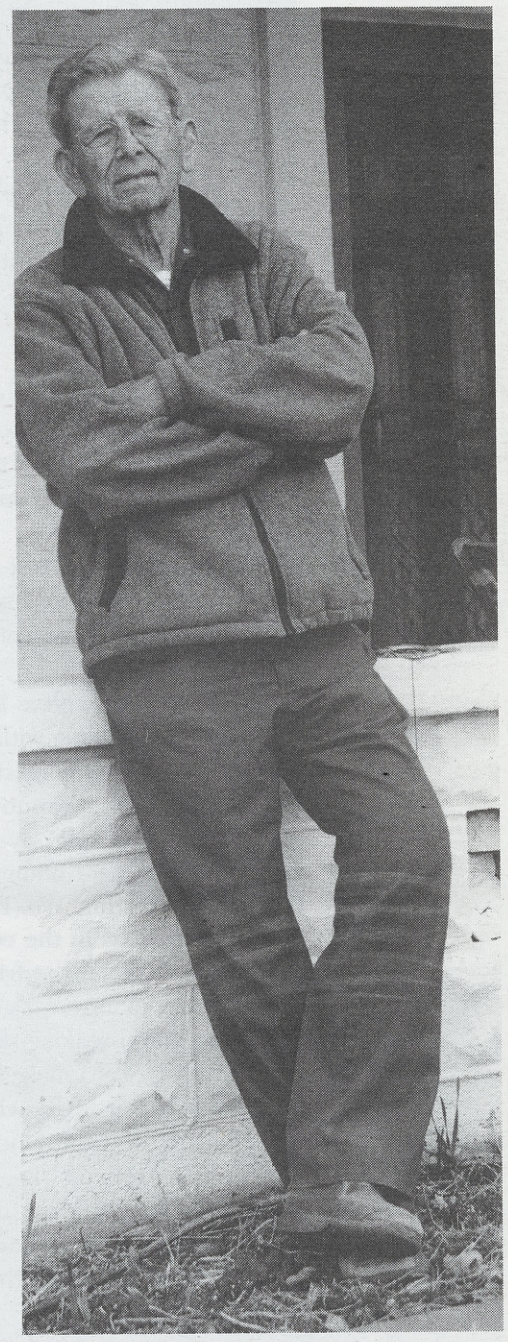
Ray Milovich, 81, arguably the most gifted raconteur around, is a walking archive of Eastern Sierra lore, but not many people know Ray's own story. Occasionally he'll make an oblique reference here or there, an "I-was-there-when" sort of deal. But Milovich has a way of zipping his lip when somebody starts poking around his past.

That's why after a recent four-hour talk with the Bishop legend, anyone would be convinced that besides being a storyteller of note, Milovich is also some sort of enchanter—a word wizard, a necromancer of narrative and a scene-setting sorcerer who can charm even the most seasoned interrogator into a compliant listener.

There's the one about how his father, Mijo Milovich, or Mike, as everyone called him, an émigré from Montenegro, worked as a stonemason, a woodcutter, a prospector and a foreman for the power company—setting lines from Bishop to Riverside.

Eventually, Mike made a name and fortune for himself as a self-taught engineer and contractor, who could digest a set of blueprints in a half-hour's time and supply an estimate to a customer without breaking a sweat. Ray said that his father, a functional illiterate, "had only gone to the third grade in the 'old country.'"

But Mike Milovich applied some Old World tenacity to New World problems, and it wouldn't be a stretch to call him a genius. He built a hydroelectric plant in 1936 for the renowned Jeffrey Ranch that still operates today. Mike never used so much as a slide rule while figuring complex engineering problems, doing most calculations in his head, and perhaps jotting down a number or two on an old board or referring to a rudimentary level now and again.



After hearing a little bit of Milovich's family history, it is clear that the man hails from solid stock. His maternal grandmother, Mary Nardello, arrived in Inyo County in 1883. She, along with her brothers, immigrated to the United States via Italy.

Her brothers raised sheep in the Fish Springs area, near Big Pine, while she tended camp. The family later built a ranch; the little green patch to the west of Highway 395, just below Keough's Hot Springs, marks the spot where the homestead once stood.

Milovich's grandmother married in 1899 and moved to Bishop in 1902, where they purchased a house on West Line Street, just off what is now known as Milovich Drive.

Ray's aunt, Luisa Clarkson, a legendary good cook, ran a boarding house for immigrant working men in an adjacent house (both structures still stand today), catering mainly to Italians, Greeks and Slavs. Many of these men worked under grueling conditions as stonemasons, building the dams and pipeline systems in the mountains above Bishop.

"They understood rocks," said Milovich.

Ray was born in February of 1923, the first of five children born to Mike and Margherita Cerventi Milovich. He attended grade school in West Bishop, in the building that now serves as

>> continued on page 29

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Sculpture by Skandar

FOR THIS ARTIST, THE TRICK IS IN "COACHING STONE"

BY WENDI GRASSESCHI

Honey alabaster. Zebra stone. Translucent alabaster. Dolomite. Lipidite. The names hold the imagination; they bring to mind images of jungles and faraway places and castles the colors of honey, and glass and cream.

All this from the names of a few rocks.

But these are no ordinary rocks. These are the names of stones that Bishop sculptor Skandar uses in his work, like a painter uses a paintbrush or a writer a pen. They are story-telling, magic stones.

"Every stone has a story to tell," said Skandar, 47, aka Alexander Reid. "It's my style to let that story emerge, release the image that is already in it, rather than to tell the stone what the story is in advance. Most of the time, I just coach the stone, talk to it and let it talk back to me.

"Even when I think I know exactly what I am going to say, quite often the stone changes that idea midway. The tip of a bird wing breaks off and the story changes; the sculpture becomes a seal, or a bear instead.

"Then I intentionally let the finished piece be a bit abstract, so that everyone can interpret it in their own way, get something different from it."

Skandar has been sculpting stone since he was a teenager. Raised in Chicago, he left home at 14 for a private college preparatory school in California. The school just happened to be the secret haven of a famous stone sculptor named John Cody. The young Reid studied with Cody, but found that his real love lay

in the mountains of the San Rafael Wilderness near Santa Barbara.

Through a series of serpentine twists and turns, Reid ended up in the Eastern Sierra at the Palisades School of Mountaineers. There he learned to rock climb. By another twist, he ended up in Pakistan, where he trained local guides over the course of a decade, dividing his time between Pakistan, the Eastern Sierra and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. It was his Pakistani community that named him "Sikandar," the Persian word for Alexander (the Great), and Skandar he became.

In his 30s, sculpting rock took a back seat to climbing rock, then selling rock climbing products (he was a salesman for The North Face's San Francisco region for a decade). But by the late '90s, Skandar said, he was going slowly, steadily crazy.

"I was drinking too much, way, way too much," he said. "One day, after I had nearly drowned following a drinking spree, I told myself that 43-year-olds can only climb rocks for so long. I told myself I would let myself sculpt if I went sober, but if I didn't stay sober, I would not sculpt. I moved to Bishop because I had a tribe of friends here, and I made my art and my recovery two sides of the same coin.

"That was three years ago," he said. "I took a job that wouldn't pay much so that I would be forced to sculpt to pay the bills. My first year here, I really didn't have a clue as to what I was doing. I had been in the fog of addiction so long, even though I had studied and gone to an art school.

"My tools were primitive and I didn't have much money. But I learned fast and I turned out a lot of sculpture. After all those years climbing rocks, it isn't that much different sculpting rock. A climber looks for the crack and planes that he can move his body through; a sculptor looks at the cracks and planes to find the image buried in the rock."

In Mammoth, his trademark birds and bears, totems and other sculptures can be found in the Mammoth Gallery, Sierra Design Studio and Accents. In Bishop, his work can be seen at Mountain Light Gallery, Crossroads Gallery, the Inyo Council for the Arts building and at the Spellbinder of Bishop bookstore, where he also works.

He recently studied with Croatian stone carving master Ante Marinovic and is beginning to market his work to larger galleries across the country. He is also working with more stone native to the Sierra, such as White Mountain slate.

"This is all about giving back to the world, not taking," he said. "When someone falls in love with one of my pieces, even if it is just a tiny bear totem, it is enough."

Bishop >> continued from page 15

the Valley Presbyterian Church, at the corner of West Line and Pa Me Lane. He graduated from Bishop Union High School in 1940, in a class of 36. He recalls how as late as the 1930s, despite the veneer of civilization, Bishop and surrounding communities still retained a definite frontier flavor.

Curiously, the number seven comes up time and again when Milovich describes the Bishop he knew as a young man. In the Milovich history of Bishop, there were seven churches, seven brothels, and seven saloons, all together ministering to the needs—carnal and spiritual—of the town.

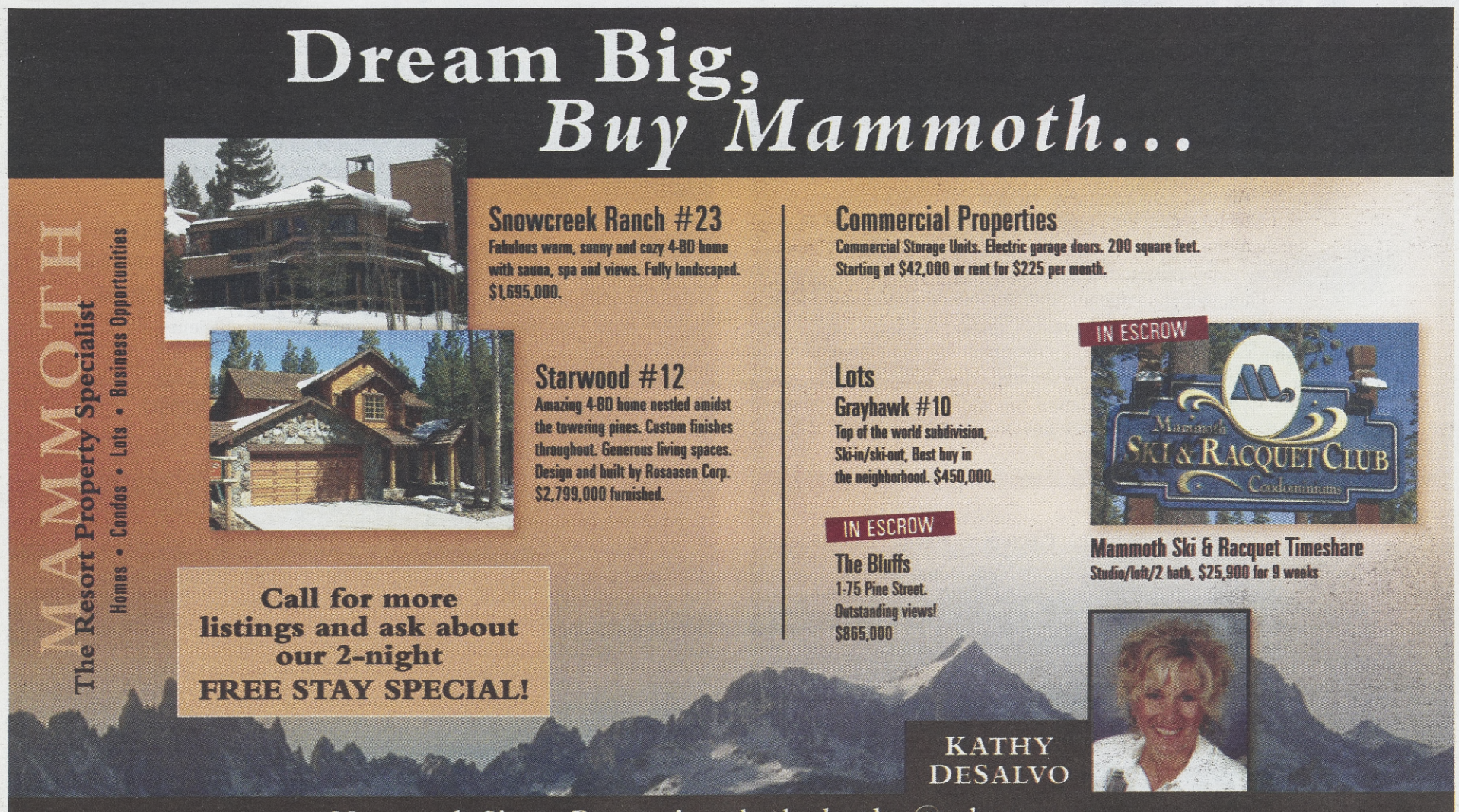
The dens of iniquity were scattered about town from Sunland Avenue to the East Line Street canal. For $2 a visit, these brothels catered to local workers, many of them without wives, who were looking to "let the pressure off," as Ray would say. The establishments served a roiling, semi-transient population, including approximately 750 men working on various city and county jobs, 400 men working the Vanadium Mine, plus another 200 or so mining at Black Rock. Add another 200 men logging local mills and you had quite a heap of guys ready to spend hard-won wages on whiskey and women.

Milovich rattled off a few madams' names, but lingered over the memory of Big Bert.

"Big Bert, she was about 6- 1 or 2, a very handsome woman," said Milovich. "I knew her very well, and she was one of the nicest persons I ever knew in my life."

"She had a deal with Joseph's (Bi-Rite Market, an Owens Valley institution since 1895). Anybody who came to town that was hungry, destitute—all they had to do was go to Joseph's, and Joseph's had a stocked basket that Bert paid for and saw to it that those people got."

Milovich chuckled, stared off into the middle distance for a moment, and said, "And that's the gods' honest truth."



Off the Grid

PAUL AND JERI DOSTIE'S CLEAN, GREEN DREAM

BY STACY CORLESS

It's easy to glance right over the white spots on the Inyo National Forest map. Floating in a sea of U.S. Forest Service green and Bureau of Land Management pink, the white spots represent something rare in Mono County—privately-owned land.

Add them up and they total barely six percent of Mono County's 3,030 square miles. They punctuate expanses of federally-owned and managed property in far-flung areas of the region—east of the Glass Mountains, north of Mono Lake. Isolated and undeveloped, the private inholdings were once the domain of miners, sheep ranchers and summer cabins. Today, this land is becoming a viable option for living "off the grid"—independent of standard water and electrical utilities.

"Renewable energy lets you live in a beautiful place comfortably," said Paul Dostie, who owns 120 acres at the edge of the Benton Range. Although massive interstate power lines are in view from Dostie's property, it is off the grid—no utilities supplied.

"It would take a transformer bigger than a house to tap into those," Dostie said, gazing at the high wires a couple miles away. Instead, he and his wife, Jeri, plan to build their green dream home powered by renewable energy resources.

The Dosties found their little piece of Eastern California heaven at 6,200 feet while exploring the Benton hills on ATVs. A little research led them to the owner, a Bakersfield sheep outfit that had forgotten that Rabbit Ranch even existed. The Dosties offered the company $12,000—a sum that included enough money to pay outstanding tax bills.

Paul, 51, a sergeant on the Mammoth Lakes Police Department, said he'd thought about moving from the couple's Crowley Lake home and onto the ranch for some time.

Jeri, 52, a nurse at Mammoth Hospital, wasn't so easily convinced. Although she loved the wide open spaces, practical matters came first. "Will I be able to use my hair dryer?" was just one of the questions she said she had.

The ranch's state-of-the-art solar water pump system is still under construction. Solar panels move like sunflowers with the light, automatically adjusting for seasonal angle changes. These panels collect photons from sunlight and convert them to a direct current that inverts the energy to 220 volts. That electricity goes to the well to pump water to four holding tanks. Gravity carries the water to the cabin, where water comes out of a garden hose with an impressive 40 pounds of pressure.

The pump, built last spring, is just the beginning of an elaborate system that Dostie said will provide water and power as well as flush the small cabin and, eventually, their home.

In March, Dostie was installing a new multiple power point controller for his hybrid system—a combination of photovoltaic solar and wind energy. He said he was planning to fly "Big Bird," a new turbine, later this spring. What is generated is 95 percent efficient energy—enough of it can be stored in 12 two-volt batteries to power the ranch for three weeks.

Everything inside and out of the 768-square-foot cabin was selected from a green perspective. Dostie bought the frame of the two-bedroom, one-bath cabin as a kit for $14,000. It is made of structurally-insulated panels, and is the first of its kind in Mono County. "It contains very little harvested lumber—a simple way to build and be earth-friendly," Dostie said.

Appliances range from an ultramodern Sun Frost renewable energy-efficient fridge with motor on top that runs on DC power to a cast iron stove from Pennsylvania made by a company that caters to Amish clientele. Dostie plans to add a woodburning hot tub on the deck to take in magnificent views of the White Mountains; inside, a propane heater cranks up without the aid of electricity. Same with the compact European instantaneous hot water heater—the traditional American clunkers are too wasteful.

Another rule off the grid: no incandescent bulbs—only compact fluorescent, aided by a "sun tunnel" in the ceiling that collects light and shines it down into the kitchen.

The Italian-made dishwasher is ultraefficient, as are the front-loading washer and dryer—straight from Sears.

They've spent much more on renewable energy than they did to buy the land, but Paul cites a general principle among sustainable living believers—for every $1 spent in energy efficiency, $4 are saved in energy production.

Just below the solar panel and water tanks—there are huge views of the White Mountains—is the site of the house. It will incorporate all the tenets of green living—the existing

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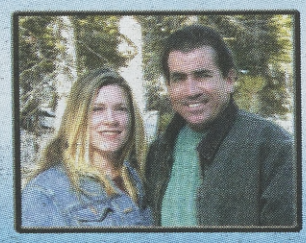

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photovoltaic system, plus passive solar and geothermal heating and cooling courtesy of a six-foot basement, extra-thick north-facing walls and fans.

The Dosties' dream might just turn out to be a model home. Mammoth realtor Steve Schwind said he sees a growing trend in off-the-grid living, and has found a market niche in properties with Wild West appeal.

A realtor since 1981, Schwind started his own company, Shoulda-Bin-A-Cowboy Land and Cattle, in 1993. ("Don't let city life get you down," his website urges.) Schwind currently has two off-the-grid listings: acreage in Taylor Canyon, near Highway 120 East, offers wild mustang sightings, free range riding and trout fishing, surrounded by public land.

Seasonal highway access to 34 acres at Gaspipe Springs near Mono Lake is perfect for the isolationist.

"It's a lot like an island," Schwind explained.

Although bare land might be cheaper than a condo in Mammoth, financing can be an issue. Five years ago, very few lenders would consider a loan for an off-the-grid property, but some are warming up to the idea, Schwind said.

With renewable energy technology and availability advancing by leaps and bounds, Schwind said, life off the grid isn't rough at all—add satellite television and Internet access and it's practically city living.

Mono County building official Bob Floyd confirmed the growing number of households living off the grid. He estimates there are "several hundred" in the region. "Solar is becoming more popular," he said, noting that renewable energy use is growing beyond areas where utilities aren't available. "People in Mono County have always been fairly environmentally conscious. It's actually practical now."

Meanwhile, back at Rabbit Ranch, the Dosties can take advantage of one luxury that citizens of Mammoth don't have: mail delivery, to a box seven miles down the road on Highway 6.

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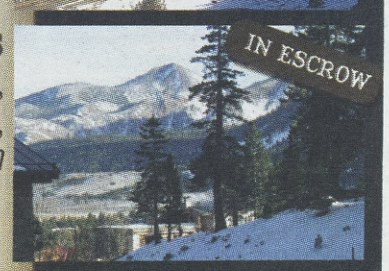

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WHAT'S UP. UP HERE

TO submit calendar items for consideration, please mail information AT LEAST six weeks in advance to What's Up, Mammoth Monthly, P.O. Box 1606, Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546, or e-mail listings to george@mammothmonthly.com.

ONGOING

Skiing

MAMMOTH MOUNTAIN. The ski resort has a slew of improvements, including the new Gondola to Canyon Lodge from the new Village at Mammoth. More info at www.mammothmountain.com or call 934-2571 or 800-MAMMOTH.

Cross Country Skiing

INYO NATIONAL FOREST. Park at the Obsidian Dome trailhead, north of Mammoth just off 395. Several miles of signed cross country ski trails through forest and open pumice bowls. Ski to Obsidian Dome or beyond to Glass Creek Meadow. Free.

SIERRA CLUB. Cross country ski tours for beginners and intermediate skiers (snowshoers may come along). Wednesday tours will start at 10 A.M. and last about two hours. Sunday tours will start at 9 A.M. and will generally go about 3 to 4 hours. Waxless touring skis are recommended. Learn about the geology and natural history of the area while getting fit and *enjoying the spectacular scenery. Until the snow melts.* For more info, call John Walter at 934-1767 or Jean Dillingham at 648-7109.

Dog Sledding

DOG SLED ADVENTURES, at the Mammoth Mountain Inn next to the Main Lodge, offers a variety of trips, including packages that go to Minaret Vista. See the Ritter Range with a gang of pooches. For more information, call 934-6270.

Road Cycling

EASTSIDE VELO CLUB. Saturday fun rides leave Great Basin Bakery in Bishop at 10 A.M. during the snow months. When the weather clears, rides leave Footloose in Mammoth. For more info call Kevin at 934-1643.

Mono Lake

MONO LAKE COMMITTEE INFORMATION CENTER AND BOOKSTORE. Great local natural history book selection, information exhibit and 25-minute video, "The Mono Lake Story." 9 A.M.-5 P.M. daily, except major holidays. Call 647-6595 for more info.

MONO BASIN SCENIC AREA VISITOR CENTER. Friday through Monday only, 9 A.M.-4 P.M. through April; daily beginning May 1. Continuing: "Of Ice and Fire: A Portrait of the Mono Basin." Free. (Interpretive tours of South Tufa area expected to resume in June; call for details.) One-half mile north of Lee Vining off Hwy. 395. 873-2408.

Adventure/Rock Climbing

NIDEVER MOUNTAIN GUIDES. Doug and his gang have been guiding mountain, rock and ice climbing expeditions in the Sierra Nevada and Yosemite for more than 20 years. Call 648-1122 for details.

SIERRA ROCK CLIMBING SCHOOL. Rock climbing instruction and guiding year round all over the Eastern Sierra. More information at www.sierrarockclimbingschool.com or call 877-686-7625.

SIERRA MOUNTAIN CENTER. SP Parker, Todd Vogel and guides lead an extensive array of spring backcountry ski trips for all levels, including families. Learn to build an igloo, then sleep in it. Cool! Check www.sierramountaincenter.com or call 873-8526.

SIERRA WILDERNESS SEMINARS. Backcountry ski guiding and instruction, from one-day tours to peak descents. Get away from the resort crowds and safely ski the pristine backcountry. Visit www.swsmtns.com or call 888-797-6867.

Yoga

TADASAN YOGA. Dagmar Zila and Julie Duff's studio has relocated to the new Body Shop building. Call 924-8746 or check www.tadasanyoga.com for latest schedule and class info.

FRIENDS OF YOGA. 95 Berner St., near the Village. Check www.friendsofyoga.com for a current class schedule.

Pilates

MOVEMENT IN MIND. Mat and equipment classes. Upstairs in the Mammoth Luxury Outlet Mall. Call 924-2043 for equipment class reservations.

Art/Galleries

CLAUDE FIDDLER has an photo exhibit opening in April and on view through June at the Mono Lake Committee Information Center and Bookstore. Hwy. 395, Lee Vining. Call 647-6595.

MAMMOTH GALLERY. Brad Dawber's photography space in Sierra Center Mall and his new Village gallery, which features artists working in a variety of media, are great reminders of why we live in and visit the Eastern Sierra. At Sierra Center Mall: 934-4911; at the Village, call 934-6120.

GALLERIE BARJUR. The evolution of Mammoth's Eastside Gallery, Tony Barrett and Paul Jurowitz's new space opened last fall in the new Village. Sculpture, photography, glass, estate jewelry, paintings and metal art by local artists and others. The Village at Mammoth, on Minaret Rd. 924-0027.

MAMMOTH SKI MUSEUM. Mammoth's new art museum, endowed by a gift of the Beekley ski art collection. Changing exhibits. Tues.-Sun., 12-5 P.M.; admission $3, two for $5, or $10 for families. 100 College Parkway, at Cerro Coso Community College. Check www.mammothskimuseum.org, or call 934-6592.

MOUNTAIN LIGHT GALLERY. Galen and Barbara Rowell's photographic and environmental legacy lives on in Mountain Light, in a former bank building. Even the walls glow with vibrant color. Through June 30: Frans Lanting's moving and fascinating animal photographs. And, of course, the Rowells' fabulous images on permanent display. 106 S. Main St. (at Line). More info at 873-7700 and www.mountainlight.com.

EDISTO GALLERY AND TEA ROOM. Mary Siceloff of Fringe Films fame has a new gallery and tea room with contemporary art and fair trade gifts for sale. Through 5/15: Tim Davis' fascinating and oddly beautiful abstracts of distressed, decaying train boxcars and coal cars of his native Colorado. 452 Old Mammoth Rd., Sierra Center Mall. More info at 934-3001.

Community

SIERRA CLUB POTLUCK/PROGRAM. Third Tues. of each month. Potluck at 6:30 P.M., program at 7:45 P.M. Location rotates among Mammoth Lakes, Crowley Lake and Bishop. Call Bryce Wheeler at 934-3764 for more info and location.

APRIL

1 MILLPOND MUSIC FESTIVAL tickets on sale. Event takes place Sept. 17-19 at Millpond County Park in Bishop. Call 873-8014.

16 TAMARACK CROSS COUNTRY SKI CENTER CLOSING DAY.

17 8TH ANNUAL ICARE FUNDRAISING DINNER. Tri-County Fairgrounds at Bishop. Trip raffle and silent auction, dinner. Proceeds benefit spay and neuter and shelter animal adoption efforts in Inyo County. Call 872-3802 for ticket info.

17-22 USSA/FAR WEST SG/DH CHAMPIONSHIPS. Call 934-2571 or 800-MAMMOTH for details.

18 JUNE MOUNTAIN CLOSING DAY.

19-22 CALIFORNIA SPECIAL SPORTS. Disabled Sports Eastern Sierra organizes this four-day skiing and snowboarding competition for athletes facing more than the usual challenges. Come and be inspired. Call 934-0791 for details or to volunteer.

22 EARTH DAY. Solar panel and bio-diesel power displays, among other features. Mammoth Mountain Ski Area, 9 A.M. -3 P.M. For more information call 934-0773.

22 FUNDRAISING DINNER. Mammoth Lakes Sports Fishing Association. Call 924-2360.

24 MANZANAR INTERPRETIVE CENTER OPENING. The dedication includes the 35th annual pilgrimage honoring Japanese-Americans forcibly relocated there during WWII and Japanese-American combat veterans, and a performance by the Satori Daiko drummers. Pilgrimage begins at 11 A.M.; center open from 8 A.M.-6 P.M. Manzanar National Historic Site. Call 878-2932 or visit www.manzanarcommittee.org, or www.nps.gov/manz.

24 OPENING DAY, FISHING SEASON. Your favorite lakes and rivers.

25 FRINGE FILM. Mary Siceloff's offbeat film series plays in Bishop, at Inyo Council for the Arts, 137 S. Main St. 6 P.M. $5. Call 934-3001 for what's on.

25 VILLAGE GONDOLA CLOSING DAY.

25 CANYON LODGE CLOSING DAY.

25 LITTLE EAGLE LODGE CLOSING DAY.

28 FRINGE FILM. The indie film series continues at Edisto Gallery, Sierra Center Mall. $5. 7 P.M. Call 934-3001 for screening info.

30-5/2 WEST COAST INVITATIONAL. Roll up to the 3rd annual spring bash, featuring pro contests, concerts, parties, and inexpensive weekend packages. Ah, spring in the mountains. Call 934-2571 or 800-MAMMOTH.

MAY

1-2 WEST COAST INVITATIONAL. See 4/30 listing for details.

8 VOLCOM PEANUT BUTTER & RAIL JAM. Call 934-2571 or 800-MAMMOTH.

9 MOTHER'S DAY HIGH TEA. Good excuse to play dress-up—dig out those long white gloves and invite your Mom. Edisto Gallery, Sierra Center Mall. 3 P.M. Call 934-3001.

12 BIRDING LECTURE. The Eastern Sierra Audubon Chapter presents Ron Smith in a presentation called "Extinct Birds of LaBrea." 7 P.M. at the White Mountain Research Station, five miles east of Bishop on East Line St. More info at 935-4088.

14-6/13 CONVICT LAKE SPRING TROUT DERBY. At Convict Lake, of course, and organized by Convict Lake Resort. Call 934-3800.

14 CLASSICAL MUSIC CONCERT. The Felici Trio performs Dvorák with guest violinist Katherine Hunka at Bishop Union High School. 7:30 P.M. Call 934-7015 for ticket info and details.

14-16 LEARN FLY FISHING. Doug Virtue hosts the weekend, with a maximum of six participants. Call the Mono Lake Committee for details at 647-6595 or visit www.monolake.org/main/seminars.htm.

15 ULTRA MARATHON. The Bishop High Sierra Ultra Marathons. Runs of 50 miles, 50 kilos and a 20-mile "fun run," starting at the Millpond County Park Recreation area at 6 A.M. The route circles the Tungsten Hills, Buttermilk country, McGee Creek and the Bishop Creek drainage. For more info, call Marie Boyd at 873-5373 or visit www.bhs50.com.

15 CLASSICAL MUSIC CONCERT. The Felici Trio, at St. Joseph's Church in Mammoth Lakes. See 5/14 for program info and details.

15 ARTIST RECEPTION. Meet Moira Donohoe and view her large format pastels of Yosemite Valley at Edisto Gallery, Sierra Center Mall, from 6 to 9 P.M. Call 934-3001 for further details.

16 SWALL MEADOWS WILDFLOWER WALK. Karen Ferrell-Ingram will guide the group on an exploration of the wide variety of shrubs and wildflowers that inhabit the upper edges of the Owens Valley. Plan to walk about three miles on moderate roads and trails. Meet at 9 A.M. at the gravel pit on Sky Meadow Road in Swall Meadows. Call 387-2913 or email ingram@telis.org for more info.

22 WILDFLOWER SLIDE SHOW. Photographer Stephen Ingram (see story this issue) presents a wildflower slide show to benefit the Eastern Sierra Land Trust. Edisto Gallery, Sierra Center Mall. 7 P.M. Call 934-3001.

22-23 ROAD BIKE RACING. The "Sand Dunes to the Sierra" ride leaves Big Pine one day and Independence the next. This is a U.S. Cycling Federation race. First day is 55 miles, with 8,000 feet of climbing. Second day is 12 miles, 5,200 feet of climbing. Ouch! Call Tom at 872-4419 for details.

26 FRINGE FILM. See 4/28 listing for details.

26-31 MULE DAYS. Perhaps Bishop's biggest claim to fame, this Memorial Day weekend mule extravaganza is a celebration of all things mule. Featuring a huge parade with horse- and mule-drawn floats, contests, rodeo events and honest-to-God cowboys and cowgirls. At the Tri-County Fairgrounds. Call 872-4263.

30 FRINGE FILM. In Bishop; see 4/25 listing for details.

JUNE

1 SIERRA STAR GOLF CLUB OPENING DAY. Call 924-4653 for conditions and info.

1 NATIONAL TRAILS DAY.

1-13 CONVICT LAKE SPRING TROUT DERBY. The fun continues at Convict Lake Resort. Call 934-3800 for details.

5-6 BOTANY FIELD TRIP TO WILDROSE PEAK AND TETRACOCCUS RIDGE. A moderately strenuous 8.4-mile roundtrip hike to Wildrose Peak, plus a climb up Tetracoccus Ridge to see, among other floral delights, the rare and elusive Tetracoccus ilicifolius shrub. Start at 10 A.M. from Wildrose Peak trailhead at Charcoal Kilns, Wildrose Canyon. Option to camp at Mahogany Flat campground Saturday night. Contact Stephen at 387-2913 or email ingram@telis.org for info.

10 ZOOLOGY LECTURE. Eminent biologist David Wake gives a talk on the worldwide decline of amphibians in the SNARL lecture series. Green Church, Benton Crossing Road and Hwy. 395. Sponsored by Mammoth Monthly. 7 P.M. Call 935-4356 for more info.

13-20 MONO LAKE MUSIC and ECOLOGY CAMP. These music students emerge from a unique weeklong experience having learned as much about the Eastern Sierra environment as they have about music. Held near Lee Vining on Mono Lake. Call 530-753-1927 for details.

17-27 MAMMOTH MOTOCROSS. Perhaps the long-running event's last hurrah, unless it can be permanently relocated. Call 934-0605 for more details.

18-20 MONO BASIN BIRD CHAUTAUQUA. The third year of the successful birding festival. Field seminars and events around Mono Lake. Sponsored by the Mono Lake Committee. Call 647-6377 or check www.monolake.org.

19 MONO LAKE COMMITTEE FUNDRAISER. Six vintners offer this wine tasting, with music by cellist Priscilla Hawkins. $50. At the Mono Inn, just north of Lee Vining. 4 P.M. Call 647-6595 for reservations and information.

19-20 AMERICAN HEAT CLASSIC CAR/HOT ROD ROAD RACE and COLLECTOR CAR AUCTION. Based at the Sierra Nevada Rodeway Inn. Call 934-2515 for details.

19-20 LAND OF VOLCANOES 4 WHEEL DRIVE INTERPRETIVE TOUR. Call Roger Vargo at 818-352-9489.

20 MONO LAKE MUSIC and ECOLOGY CAMP CONCERT. The students' joyous closing concert takes place at the beautiful Mono Inn just north of Lee Vining. 5 P.M. For more info and tickets, call 530-753-1927.

25 MAMMOTH MOUNTAIN BIKE PARK OPENING DAY. Call 934-2571 or 800-MAMMOTH.

25-26 MEAN MOUNTAIN RUN MOTORCYCLE FESTIVAL. The mostly-Harley riders descend for fun, road rides and revving those loud engines. Contact 934-2515 for details and info.

27 FRINGE FILM. In Bishop; see 4/25 or call 934-3001 for details.

30 FRINGE FILM. In Mammoth; see 4/28 or call 934-3001 for details.

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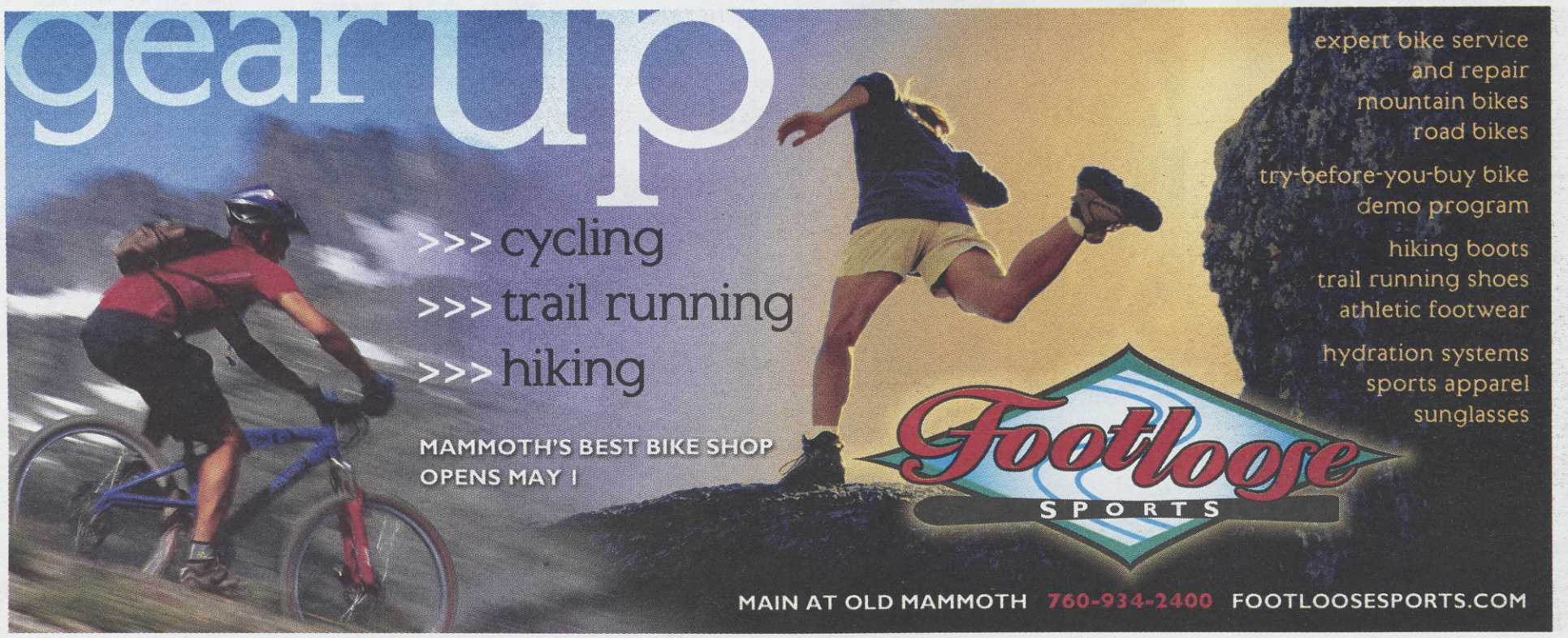
MAMMOTH 3-DOT

Dotsa Wrap

In case you missed it, the very last **Mammoth Mountain Motocross** is June 17-27. It is dubbed, curiously, "The Last Annual Grand Finale," as if we've had annual grand finales annually. It is—er, was—the longest continuously-running MX event in the U.S. See ya, and we'll hardly know what to do with all that, um, quiet … Sighs of relief at the **Inyo National Forest's Mammoth office**, which came up with nearly $400,000 to cover an expected budget shortfall to run the Reds Meadow/Devils Postpile bus. The shortfall was projected because the feds ruled earlier this year that the Golden Eagle National Park passes, at $65 a pop and covering whole families, can be used to get on the mandatory bus. … This is a big change from last year, when everyone had to pony up, Golden Eagle pass or not. And by the way, a single season pass for the Postpile bus is $35 per individual. So the Golden Eagle pass, which is good for all national parks and monuments, is a way better deal for almost everybody, and you can pick 'em up at the Visitors Center. … While we're in the neighborhood, the **Shady Rest Winter Needs Assessment** study responses reveal that the battle between XC skiers and snowmobilers might be secondary to the concerns over **dog poop**. The Forest Service has posted a sign at the Shady Rest trailhead threatening to ban dogs altogether unless their human companions do the right thing and bag the poop. They've also supplied bags, a trash can and shovel. Taking matter into her own hands, so to speak, has been Edelweiss Lodge's **Marta Smith** of **Marta's Doggie Day Care**. She takes her own trowel and bags out there to keep the place civilized for us. And for the pooches, too. … Edisto Gallery proprietress **Mary Siceloff** is in cahoots with **Sierra Summer Festival** poohbah **Jim Tenney** in a poster competition for the 2005 monthlong classical music bash. The collectible poster has traditionally been created from an original watercolor; this year's competition is open to any old medium at all: watercolor, oil, acrylic, photography, woodcut, collage, mosaic, sculpture, hologram (hologram!) or, one supposes, beans, candy, and uncooked pasta, and if you don't believe that, ask **Jason Mecier**. … This year's festival theme: "Music in the Mountains," and we ain't talking about that thump-thump-thumping from the speakers of that SUV over there. Call 934-3001 for contest rules. … Of 9,000 spas in the U.S., Forbes magazine rates June Lake's **Double Eagle** in the top five. Wow. … The National Park Service estimates visitation at the newly redone **Manzanar War Relocation Center** at 250,000 over the next three to five years. Manzanar was one of 10 camps at which Japanese-American citizens and resident Japanese aliens were "interned" or forcibly relocated during World War II. Its new Interpretive Center opens April 24, just off 395 between Lone Pine and Independence. …To stop the spread of the predatory and destructive **New Zealand mud snail**, Fish and Game's **Denyse Racine** suggests fisherpeople use two sets of waders: one for tromping from stream site to stream site, and another for getting into new water. This mud snail thing is a big problem, in case ya didn't know. … **Rick Wood** was chosen again as Mammoth's mayor by the new Town Council, but afterward he repeated his call for an elected mayor. "We need to have that discussion," he said to the other four council members, which included newcomer **Skip Harvey**. "I have not wanted to sponsor it for the obvious reasons," Hizzoner said. "It has to come from the community." … Councilman **Kirk Stapp**, standing on principle, abstained from the mayoral vote, arguing that the process itself might—or might not—be flawed. "We've never had a discussion. I say, 'Wait a minute. What are the advantages and disadvantages about the way we do this?'" … Oh, and in case you were wondering, the new seating for the council continues to have **John Eastman** on the far right, **Stapp** on the far left and **Wood** squarely in the middle. … The big skateboard park that everyone thought was going to be built this summer may not be built yet after all, despite adequate funds for construction. So far, the **Brothers Skate Park** and the **Mammoth Lakes Foundation**, on whose land the park is supposed to be built, haven't agreed on a land transfer. … Last summer, Mammoth road construction caused lotsa nightmare conditions—and mucho lost business. This year, the main FUBAR is going to be Old Mammoth Road, between Chateau Road and Minaret Road.



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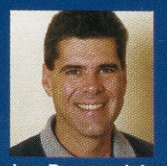

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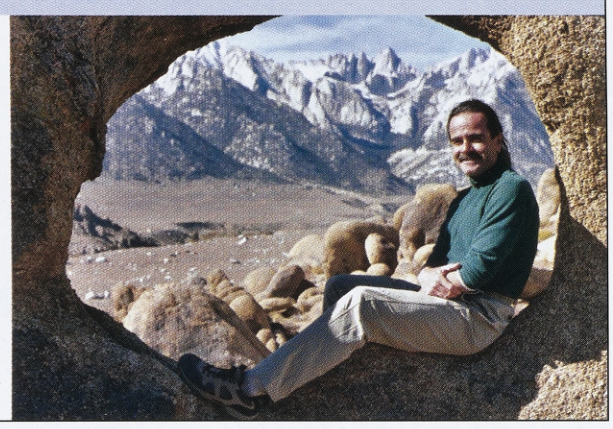

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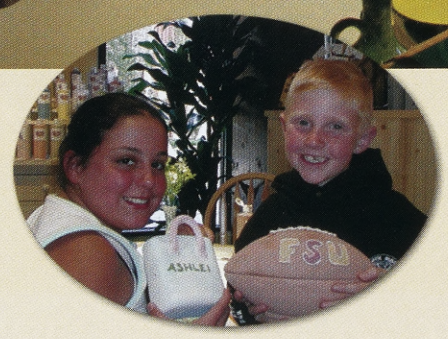

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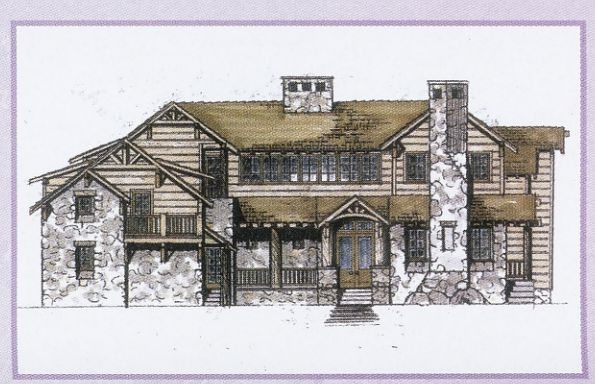
Starwood Lot #12. Bordered by woods on one side and Sierra Star's fairway #13 along the back. With 4,100 sq. ft. of well-designed space, this 4-BD/5-BA home includes an impressive glassed-in library with fireplace, unique double staircase, large dining room with wooded view, two wonderfully designed master suites each with fireplace, and wood-beamed kitchen/open-truss great room combination with golf course view. Cozy upstairs loft provides a special space for children. Knotty alder cabinetry is designed for beauty and function and combined with granite kitchen counter tops and tumbled marble baths. Natural stone veneer and Marvin all-wood true divided windows put the finishing touch on this remarkable home. **$2,799,000** ***furnished.***



Rosaasen Rustic Elegance, Starwood, #46. Located on a quiet Starwood cul-de-sac, this fabulous 5-BD custom home is an active family's dream. A large media room is located in the separate children's wing, accessed by its own stairway. Spacious windows in both kitchen and Great Room frame Sierra Star's 13th fairway. Large dining room with butler's pantry is ideal for gracious entertaining. As with all Rosaasen homes, custom finishes include granite countertops, custom designed knotty alder cabinets, tumbled marble baths, hand hewn hickory flooring and custom crown molding, base and wainscot. ***Call for pricing.***

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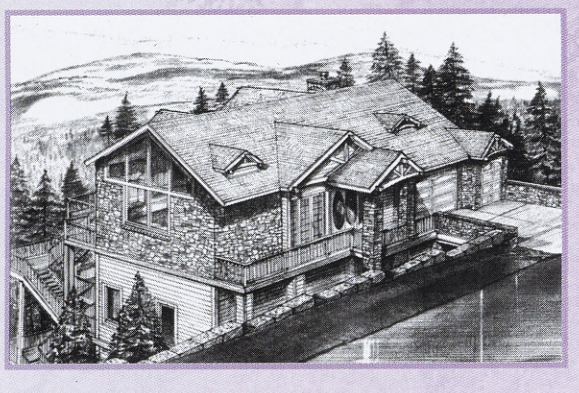

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